



# The Liker Health Report

Keeping People Focused on Staying Fit & Healthy

Spring 2008

The Liker Health Report is a quarterly publication intended to raise awareness of health-related issues and to encourage readers to take charge of their health and live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

## The Heart of the Matter: INFANT HEALTH & PHTHALATES

“Phthalates” is the new buzz word when it comes to household products that could potentially be health hazards. We introduced readers to these environmental toxins in our Spring 2007 article about heating food in plastic containers. Phthalates make plastic containers flexible without being brittle, and the heating process increases the likelihood that these chemicals are released into the food or beverage. Due to their hormone-like activity, phthalates can interrupt endocrine processes in humans and animals.

A recent study in the February 2008 issue of *Pediatrics* detailed a study of 163 infants born between 2000 and 2005. Eighty-one percent of the newborns had detectable levels of phthalate metabolites in their urine, and the amount of metabolites increased when the use of baby shampoo, lotion, and powder increased. The researchers did not see an increase in metabolites with use of baby wipes or diaper creams.

### Phthalates In Everyday Products

- ▶ food packaging
- ▶ personal care products (fragrances, shampoos, body lotions, cosmetics)
- ▶ children’s toys
- ▶ blood storage containers, medical tubing & I.V. bags
- ▶ vinyl flooring

The doctors involved with the *Pediatrics* study have cause for concern. Previous animal studies have shown that pre-natal exposure to phthalates is harmful to development of the reproductive tract and causes a decline in sperm quality. A 2006 study found that high levels of a specific phthalate in breast milk was related to lower testosterone in baby boys between one and three months of age. More research is emerging, yet the long-term effects aren’t known. However, the researchers agree that limiting an infant’s exposure to phthalates is probably a very good idea. There is a dosage effect such that increased exposure equals increased health risk.

Because phthalates are also used to help stabilize fragrance in personal care products, using a fragrance-free product is likely to have fewer phthalates. Some “phthalate-free” products are on the market. Phthalates are currently banned in personal care products sold in Europe, as well as in some toys. Undoubtedly, demand for such products in the United States will increase as more research comes to light. If you are unable to find phthalate-free products in your area, try an online search (“phthalate free baby products”).

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## Your Lifestyle: GOLF & PHYSICAL TRAINING *by Steve Jordan*

### ***Golf: A Game For Life!***

Every golfer wants to play better golf! Enthusiasts of all ages and abilities can play and enjoy the game. And as golf continues to grow in popularity, the average person who plays doesn't take the time to prepare their bodies for this athletic endeavor. Though golf is not often considered physically demanding, it is a game that requires a mix of flexibility, coordination, strength and power. If you are lacking in one of these areas, not only will your golf game be "under par", but the repetitive nature of the game may make you more susceptible to injury.

*"Amateur golfers achieve approximately 90% of their peak muscle activity when driving a golf ball."*

Paul Chek, Golf Specialist

The key to any exercise program is consistency and gradual progression. The general health benefits of exercise, such as increasing lean muscles tissue, reducing body fat, increasing cardiovascular health, improving posture, decreasing musculoskeletal pain, and improving balance will help keep golfers on the links longer and playing with greater ease. However, to improve golf performance and reduce injuries commonly associated with golf, a more sport-specific program should be performed. An effective program will incorporate flexibility, endurance, and strength training exercises that closely mimic the movements of the game.

### **Flexibility Training**

Flexibility training is essential in reaching a golfer's full potential. If you are someone who generally has some kind of ankle, knee, hip, shoulder, elbow or neck pain after a game of golf, you need to focus much more on your flexibility. General and specific stretches for golf should be performed as part of a warm-up to help prepare the body for more vigorous activity to follow and as a cool down to recover from the demands of the game. General stretches targeting muscles of the hip and lower back region are helpful for improving your range of motion during your swing. Specific stretches that target muscles that will improve performance by maximizing swinging power, club head speed, and control. An example of a dynamic stretch is swinging a light (2-8 lbs) medicine ball from side to

side, in a rotational manner, similar to your golf swing pattern.

### **Endurance Training**

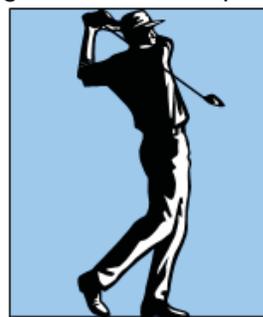
Unless you are walking the course, golf does not require a high level of aerobic fitness, but moderate cardiovascular conditioning can increase your stamina, especially during the back nine. For overall health improvements, an accumulated 30 minutes of moderate activity per day is recommended. For weight loss and to achieve higher levels of fitness, durations exceeding 45 minutes and of higher intensities (walking up hills) should be performed 4x per week.

### **Strength Training**

Strength training can improve a golfer's performance by increasing muscle strength, which provides the ability to generate more power while swinging a club. Many golfers who do not strength train for the demands of the game end up compensating with muscles that are not required to do as much work, increasing the risk of injury. Targeting muscles of the core and hips with emphasis on rotational movements can help improve your performance and reduce the risk of injury.

A good exercise to develop core strength is the seated medicine ball rotation. Holding a medicine ball away from body, sit on the floor with knees bent at 90 degrees, slightly lean back to create tension in the abs, keep spine long or chest high, and rotate medicine ball touching the ground on the left and right side of hips 10x. To increase the challenge, raise feet off the ground maintaining good posture and increase reps to 18x.

For a comprehensive golf training program that is guaranteed to improve your performance, maximize your time, keep money in your pocket, and even change your appearance visit [www.stevejordan.com](http://www.stevejordan.com). A little time invested into an exercise program can turn into many more enjoyable years on the greens!



## Playing It Safe: MRSA

### ***What is MRSA?***

MRSA is an anachronism for **M**ethicillin-resistant **S**taphylococcus **a**ureus. It is an infection caused by a bacteria called Staphylococcus aureus ("staph") which has recently become resistant to the most common and effective antibiotic used to treat it -- methicillin. MRSA is also resistant to amoxicillin and penicillin. MRSA originated in hospitals where many patients acquired a "staph" infection while receiving treatment for an illness or condition they already had. Elderly patients and people with weakened immune systems were commonly infected. This type is referred to as hospital-acquired (HA) MRSA.

In the 1990's, MRSA began showing up in people of all ages who had not been in the hospital and who were otherwise healthy. This type is now termed community-associated (CA) MRSA. An increasing number of patients began developing serious skin and soft tissue infections as well as a dangerous form of pneumonia.

### ***How do you become infected?***

Staphylococcus bacteria live on the skin or in the nose of nearly one third of the entire population. These are healthy people who are referred to as being "colonized" or "carriers"; they are not considered to be infected with MRSA. However, the bacteria can be passed to another person through skin-to-skin contact or by inhalation.

Staph bacteria living on the skin or in the nose is benign unless it gets into the tissue through an open wound or a cut. Most healthy people can fight off an infection, but if the immune system is compromised, they may have a more difficult time. If the staph bacteria is resistant to most antibiotics including methicillin, it can be fatal, particularly if it gets into the bloodstream, bones, joints, heart valves, or lungs.

### ***What are the signs of a skin infection?***

A staph infection of the skin begins as small red, possibly itchy bumps like that of a spider bite or pimple. In fact, many people go to their doctors complaining of spider bites. The bumps may progress into abscesses, or pus-filled tissue that is inflamed and painful.

### ***What are the risk factors for acquiring MRSA?***

As the name implies, the risk of hospital-acquired MRSA increases during a stay in the hospital, particularly in people who are elderly, have pre-existing conditions, have a weekend immune system, or have open wounds, such as burns or surgical incisions. Medical devices, such as urinary catheters, feeding tubes, or dialysis equipment, are possible sources of infection. MRSA is even more prevalent in long-term care facilities such as convalescent homes and rehabilitation facilities.

Community-acquired MRSA is likely to affect children who become infected through a cut or scrape. Because their immune systems are not fully developed, MRSA can be extremely dangerous, particularly if they develop pneumonia. Athletes who play team or contact sports can get MRSA from cuts, abrasions, and skin-to-skin contact with a MRSA carrier. Sharing of personal items, such as towels, uniforms, equipment, or shaving razors can also spread the bacteria. People with weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV/AIDS have an increased risk of CA-MRSA infections.

### ***How is MRSA diagnosed?***

Traditionally, a sample of the suspect tissue and/or nasal secretions is cultured in a laboratory and analyzed for the drug-resistant bacteria; results are obtained in 48 hours. Newer tests can analyze the DNA of the bacteria in the sample and results are obtained in just a few hours.

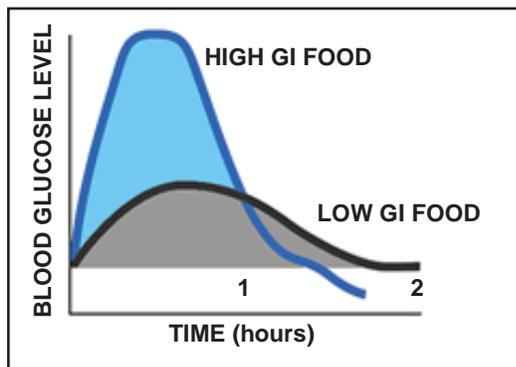
### ***How is MRSA treated?***

Both HA-MRSA and CA-MRSA are treated with vancomycin, an antibiotic that, for the time being, is effective in most cases. Some hospitals have recently reported cases of vancomycin-resistant MRSA. Other antibiotics used include Bactrim, Septra, Zyvox; however, doctors worry that the staph bacteria may become resistant to these drugs. It is important to take the medication exactly as prescribed finish the entire course. Failure to do so contributes to the bacteria evolving and ultimately becoming more resistant to the drugs. If a patient has an abscess(es) and the MRSA has not spread beyond the surface tissue, the recommended treatment is to drain the abscess.

*Continued on page 7.*

## The Inside Story: GLYCEMIC INDEX & WEIGHT LOSS

The health risks of being overweight or obese are well documented, and people are dieting in record numbers. In its 2004 national survey, the Calorie Control Council found that one-third of adult Americans (71 million people) were currently following a diet; this was an increase of thirty-five percent from 2000. Whether for the altruistic health reasons or for personal appearance, sticking to a weight loss program can be difficult. A weight management plan (aka “diet”) based on the principles of the glycemic index can be a healthy way of eating which promotes weight loss and increases one’s feeling of energy.



### What is the glycemic index?

The glycemic index (GI) is a system of ranking carbohydrates according to how much and how quickly they raise blood sugar levels after being ingested. The scale goes from zero to 100, with glucose being the reference point at 100. Glucose is readily absorbed into the bloodstream and produces a rapid rise in blood sugar followed by a rapid release of insulin. Insulin promotes fat storage (extra calories stored as fat). Likewise, foods with a high glycemic index have the same effect. Conversely, low glycemic foods are digested and absorbed more slowly, thereby producing a gradual rise in both blood sugar and insulin levels.



### Did You Know?

The glycemic index was first introduced by Dr. David Jenkins, a Canadian researcher in the 1980s.

### How do low glycemic diets promote health?

Studies have shown that consistently eating low glycemic foods can promote good health.

#### LOW GLYCEMIC DIET

- ▶ Reduces cholesterol levels
- ▶ lowers heart disease risk by decreasing inflammation
- ▶ Increases the body’s sensitivity to insulin, thereby reducing insulin levels and insulin resistance
- ▶ Maintains more even blood sugar levels which prevents lethargy and “low blood sugar headaches”
- ▶ Improves diabetes control in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes
- ▶ Controls appetite and delays hunger, which aids in weight loss
- ▶ Prolongs physical endurance in aerobic activities such as running or cycling

A diet based on the glycemic index can be an integral part of a weight loss program. (Remember, physical activity is also a must!) The chart at the right shows the GI of some commonly consumed foods. For a more complete listing, visit [www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com). Below is a low-GI vegetable salad. Aim to eat low or moderate GI foods and avoid the high-GI foods.

#### Carrot & Beetroot Salad\*

- 2 c. chopped romaine lettuce or salad greens
- 1 green apple, unpeeled
- 2 medium carrots, grated
- 1 medium beetroot, grated
- 2 oz. raw almonds, halved or roughly chopped
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil

*Line a large serving platter with lettuce or salad greens. Chop the apple into 1/2 inch cubes and brush with lemon juice to prevent browning.*

*Combine the grated carrots, beetroot, chopped almonds and apple in a bowl and toss with the olive oil. Assemble his bright red and orange root veggie salad on top of the greens and enjoy. Serves 4 as a side salad.*

\*Recipe from Julie Daniluk, GI NEWS  
[www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com)

**Glycemic Index for Commonly Consumed Foods\***

<b>Glycemic Index for Commonly Consumed Foods*</b>					
<b>Grains</b>					
Barley	22	Buckwheat	54	Bulgar	47
Cornmeal	68	Hominy	40	Rice, white	72
Rice, brown	50	Rice, basmati	58		
<b>Pasta</b>					
Brown rice pasta	92	Lasagne sheets	55	Linguine	50
Macaroni	45	Spaghetti, white	64	Vermicelli	35
<b>Bread</b>					
Bagel	72	Kaiser roll	73	Multigrain wheat	43
Pita	57	Pumpnickel	50	Rye	64
White	72	Waffles	76		
<b>Cereals</b>					
All Bran	39	Bran Chex	58	Cheerios	74
Corn Pops	80	Corn Bran	75	Corn Chex	83
Cream of Wheat	66	Crispix	87	Grapenuts	71
Life	66	NutriGrain	66	Oats, 1 minute	66
Porridge, oats	75	Puffed Wheat	74	Rice Bran	19
Rice Chex	89	Rice Krispies	82		
<b>Crackers, Cookies, Chocolate</b>					
Soda crackers	74	Water crackers	78	Wheat crackers	67
Oatmeal	54	Shortbread	64	Vanilla Wafers	77
Chocolate, milk	49	Chocolate, dark	23		
<b>Beans</b>					
Lima Beans	32	Baked Beans	40	Black Beans	30
Blackeye Peas	42	Butter Beans	36	Chickpeas	32
Kidney Beans	23	Navy Beans	33	Pinto Beans	39
Red Lentils	26	Split Peas	32	Soy Beans	18
<b>Vegetables</b>					
Beets	64	Carrot, boiled	67	Carrot, raw	16
Corn, sweet	53	Peas, green	47	Potato, baked	94
Potatoes, white, boiled	55	Potatoes, white mashed	67	Potatoes, instant mashed	97
Sweet potato	54	Tomatoes, raw	6	Yam	51
<b>Fruit</b>					
Apple	40	Apple juice	40	Apricot, canned	64
Apricot, dried	32	Banana	51	Cherries	22
Fruit cocktail	55	Grapefruit	25	Grapefruit Juice	45
Grapes	43	Kiwi	53	Mango	51
Orange	48	Orange juice	57	Pear	41
Pineapple	66	Plum	24	Raisins	64
Strawberries	40	Watermelon	76		
<b>Dairy</b>					
Ice cream	62	Milk, skim	32	Milk, whole	34
Milk, chocolate	49	Milk, soy	40	Yogurt, plain	36
Yogurt, low-fat w/sugar & fruit	33	Yogurt, low-fat w/aspartame & fruit	14		

\*Glycemic Index values are AVERAGE measurements based on variety and country of origin. For the GI values of your favorite foods, see [www.glycemicindex.com](http://www.glycemicindex.com)

**Glycemic Index Food Gauge**

LOW = less than 55  
 MODERATE = 56 - 69  
 HIGH = 70 or greater

Foods with a high glycemic index include those made with refined white flour (i.e., white bread, bagels, crackers, doughnuts and pastries); white sugar or high fructose corn syrup (i.e., soda and candy); white rice; and potatoes. As a rule of thumb, processed foods typically have a higher glycemic index than whole and high fiber foods.

**TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LOW GI "DIET"**

- ▶ Fill up on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans.
- ▶ Snack on nuts and seeds.
- ▶ Satisfy a chocolate craving with dark chocolate which has a lower GI than milk or semi-sweet.
- ▶ Eat small meals frequently throughout the day instead of two or three big meals. A particular food's GI is the same whether you eat 1 serving or 2 servings, but the 2-serving portion will produce a higher glucose peak and will take longer to return to baseline when compared to the 1-serving portion.
- ▶ Balance the glycemic impact of a meal by including a lean protein and good fat (i.e., olive oil).
- ▶ Include 30-60 minutes of exercise on most days of the week.

A low glycemic diet can be a healthy choice for people trying to lose weight. Unlike low carb diets, it is neither overly restrictive nor high in saturated fat. You don't have to give up carbs, just choose them wisely.

## Personal Health: ALOPECIA

Just about everyone notices that a few strands of their scalp hair fall out daily; the tell-tale signs are usually in the hair brush or the shower drain. At any one time, ninety percent of the scalp hair is growing while the other ten percent is resting. The resting phase lasts between two and four months after which the resting hair falls out and new hair regrows in its place. Gradual hair thinning is part of the normal aging process. If the hair falls out excessively, there can be an underlying medical, hormonal, or genetic cause. The medical term for more-than-normal hair loss is alopecia and there are several types depending upon whether it is permanent or temporary.

Permanent hair loss is commonly referred to as baldness. It can affect men or women, hence the names male-pattern baldness and female-pattern baldness. The medical name for both types is androgenetic alopecia. Hairs which were once thick, strong, and deeply rooted in the scalp become thinner and less deeply rooted with each growth cycle. Consequently, the hairs fall out more easily. The genetic trait for baldness is inherited and it determines the age of onset, the speed and extent of the baldness.

Men often start to lose hair at an early age, sometimes in their teens or early 20s. The hairline begins to recede until the top of the head is bald; hair loss may stop at partial loss or proceed to complete baldness. Conversely, women maintain their frontal hairline and rarely become completely bald. Instead, the hair becomes thin over the entire scalp.

A rare form of permanent hair loss is cicatricial alopecia which is caused by inflammation and scarring of the hair follicle which prevents it from re-growing new hair. There is no known cause of the inflammation. People with lupus erythematosus and other skin conditions may have cicatricial alopecia.



### Did You Know?

On average, scalp hair grows a half inch every month.

There are three main types of temporary hair loss.

**Alopecia areata** - an autoimmune disease with no known cause in which healthy people lose their hair. The hair grows back and the loss/regrow cycle may occur several times. Genetics play a possible role since a family history of alopecia areata makes one more likely to have it. Doctors believe that an environmental trigger or a virus initiates the condition.

**Telogen effluvium** - overall hair thinning caused by an abrupt change in the normal hair growth/resting cycle. This is usually due to an emotional or physiological shock which causes the hair to prematurely enter the resting state and then fall out. Once the condition that caused the shock corrects itself, hair will regrow; this can take several months.

### Some Common Causes

- ✓ medications used to treat arthritis, gout, depression, heart conditions, hypertension, and birth control
- ✓ diseases such as diabetes and lupus erythematosus
- ✓ hormonal imbalances such as an overactive or underactive thyroid
- ✓ age-related hormonal changes such as menopause
- ✓ pregnancy - many women lose more hair three months after having a baby
- ✓ fungal infections of the scalp such as ringworm
- ✓ poor nutrition, particularly inadequate protein or iron intake - often in vegetarians or people with eating disorders
- ✓ chemical hair treatments such as perms, straighteners, and dyes, particularly if they are used incorrectly

**Traction alopecia** - bald patches caused by hairstyles that pull the hair tightly, such as braids, cornrows, or pigtails and by excessive hairstyling. Hair will grow back if there is no permanent damage to the hair roots.

In the next issue of *The Liker Health Report*, we'll discuss when to seek medical advice, diagnosing alopecia, and treatment options.

## MRSA *continued from page 3*

### **How can I protect myself from MRSA?**

Personal hygiene is the best way to avoid acquiring or transmitting a MRSA infection. As with colds and flu, hand washing is critical. Other key behaviors include:

- ▶ When using public restrooms, wash your hands with soap for the length of time it takes you to sing "Happy Birthday". Dry your hands with a disposable paper towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet and open the restroom door.
- ▶ Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't nearby.
- ▶ Never share personal items such as razors, toothbrushes, towels, linens, or clothing. If you must share athletic equipment, clean it with an antiseptic solution before using it.
- ▶ Take a shower (with soap) immediately after athletic practice or games.
- ▶ Cover all cuts, abrasions, sores, and wounds with sterile, dry bandages until they have completely healed. Avoid touching another person's bandage(s).
- ▶ If you have a cut, abrasion, sore, or wound wash and dry bed linens, towels, and athletic uniforms or clothes worn at the gym on the "hot" cycle; use bleach if appropriate.

### **Are humans responsible for MRSA?**

Bacteria are capable of adapting themselves to survive treatment with antibiotics, and only a few drugs can effectively combat staph. However, antibiotic resistance is largely human caused. Ever since the discovery of penicillin and its descendants, antibiotics have been over-prescribed and inappropriately used. Antibiotics won't cure the common cold, the flu, or other viruses, yet doctors have prescribed them for years, often at the insistence of patients.

Cattle, pigs, and poultry raised in the United States are routinely fed antibiotics, even if they are not sick. There is concern that the antibiotic residuals in red meat and poultry as well as in the groundwater may contribute to unnecessary risk. The European Union and other industrialized nations have bans against the routine feeding of antibiotics.



## The Medicine Cabinet

### Zantac® Treatment of GERD

**Trade Name:** Ranitidine (ra nye' te deen)

**Drug Classification:** H<sub>2</sub> blocker.

**Purpose:** treats conditions caused by too much acid, including stress ulcers (not caused by H. pylori), gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD); OTC ranitidine is used to treat and prevent heartburn caused by acid indigestion and "sour stomach". Prescription ranitidine may also be used to treat bleeding in the upper gastrointestinal tract and to prevent ulcers, and to heal stomach damage caused by overuse of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications.

**Action:** decreases the amount of acid produced by the stomach.

**Dispensing Method:** oral tablet, effervescent tablet or syrup is typically taken once daily at bedtime; it may also be prescribed two to four times daily. Over-the-counter oral tablets are taken once or twice daily, 30 to 60 minutes before eating foods that cause heartburn symptoms.

**Major Precautions:** over-the-counter ranitidine should not be taken longer than two weeks unless your are specifically advised to by your physician. The effervescent tablets should be dissolved in eight ounces of water before drinking.

**Side Effects:** headache, upset stomach, stomach pain, constipation, diarrhea, or vomiting. If any of the above side effects do not go away or become severe, notify your doctor. **SERIOUS:** abnormal heart rhythm, rapid or slow heartbeat, low blood pressure, confusion, slurred speech, drowsiness, or difficulty breathing -- call the doctor immediately.

*As with any medication, always follow your doctor's instructions, and if you have any problems, side effects, or questions, follow up with your doctor or pharmacist.*



### **Did You Know?**

An estimated 1.2 million hospital patients are infected with MRSA annually in the United States.

## What's the Message?

### FOR YOUR PHTHALATE AWARENESS:

Emerging medical research suggests that phthalate exposure in infants may cause health risks later in life.

Parents of newborns may want to consider using "phthalate-free" baby products.

### FOR YOUR EXERCISE AWARENESS:

Golf is a game that requires a mix of flexibility, coordination, strength and power.

A sports-specific program which includes exercises that mimic the movements in golf will improve golf performance and reduce injuries.

### FOR YOUR MRSA AWARENESS:

MRSA has made the transition from the hospital environment to the community, affecting people who are otherwise healthy.

Personal hygiene is the best way to avoid acquiring or transmitting a MRSA infection.

### FOR YOUR NUTRITION AWARENESS:

A diet based on the glycemic index can be an integral part of a weight loss program.

Eating lower glycemic index foods can improve blood sugar control in type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

### FOR YOUR ALOPECIA AWARENESS:

Gradual hair thinning is part of the normal aging process; excessive hair loss can signal a problem.

Temporary alopecia results from hormonal imbalances, nutritional status, medications, certain diseases or infections.

### Keeping Stress in Check

*Consider your mistakes opportunities to learn and grow as a person.*

***Dear Dr. Liker... My doctor now offers digital mammograms. Is there any benefit over a regular mammogram?***

With traditional mammograms, it is difficult to detect cancer in tissue that is dense. That's because both dense tissue and cancer appear as white on a mammogram. Fatty tissue shows up as dark, so it's much easier to see the white spots (cancer) among the dark areas on a mammogram of a fatty breast. Younger women typically have dense breast tissue. Thus, digital mammograms are more effective in detecting breast cancer in women who are under age 50, have dense breasts, and are either pre-menopausal (have not started menopause) or peri-menopausal (at the onset of menopause). Digital mammography is particularly beneficial for women with a family or personal history of breast cancer.

Instead of x-ray film, digital mammography uses solid-state detectors which convert the traditional x-rays into electrical signals which are used to create an image on a computer monitor. Just like traditional mammography, the skill of the doctor (radiologist) who reads the mammogram is important.

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## Keeping People Focused on Staying Fit & Healthy

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