

Get Into **betterHEALTH!** with Dr. Derek Lee

To join our e-mail list for our **free monthly newsletter**, just send the e-mail links of your friends and family to:
drlee@yourbetterhealthguide.com

betterHEALTH clinic
3838 Midland Ave., Suite 103
Toronto, ON, M1V 5K5
416-291-5120

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In the New Year, most people like to review their lives and think about ways they can improve. While most people will not achieve all of their health goals, at least this time of reflection gives them a chance to consider what might be most important in helping them feel better and live longer. A key point in education is repetition and healthy reminders!

These holiday gifts were made available to me by a company called Wellsource and gives you a choice among the following New Year's Challenges: ["A New Year's Challenge or Two for 2005"\(pdf\)](#), ["Be Healthy and Fit in 2005"\(pdf\)](#), and ["Choose a Better You in 2005"\(pdf\)](#). Each one includes key health principles all linked to a longer, healthier life. Use the one you like or use all three for your own benefit. If you are not ready to include all of these health guidelines into your lives, just choose one you are willing to commit to for the year and work on it.

Feel free to pass on this email to whomever you like.

Wishing you a healthy and prosperous New Year!

Dr. Derek Lee and Staff of the betterHEALTH clinic.

New Office Hours. (Effective January 1, 2005)

betterHEALTH Clinic

Monday, Wednesday 9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Friday 9:15 - 10:30/4:00 - 6:00
Saturday 9:00 - 12:00 (every other Saturday
as of January 8, 2005)

Corporate Clinics

Monday Shepherd Village Long-Term Care Facility
Tuesday Kraft Canada, (Moatfield & Parklawn facilities)
Thursday Rogers Cable York Mills
Friday Rogers Cable Richmond Hill

Best remedy for that little cough that won't go away

If you are experiencing one of those chronic coughs or throat irritations that hang on forever after a cold...then I have the remedy for you. It's called "astragalus". The results have been really quite remarkable. Over the last 2 or 3 years, this has been a common problem attached to catching a cold virus. Astragalus helps by tonifying or energizing the lungs that are still weak from the aftermath of the cold virus

Inaccurate Home Blood Pressure Monitoring

A new study suggests many people may be making common errors when taking their blood pressure.

While up to 1/3 of people with hypertension have a blood pressure monitor at home, measurements may be inaccurate.

In a study of 80 patients who bought digital blood pressure monitors 90% of them didn't know they should rest for at least two minutes before taking a reading; 1/2 knew to place the cuff just above the elbow, and 70 % didn't know that how they sit could alter the reading. A patient's back should be supported with legs uncrossed and the arm resting at heart level. Otherwise readings may be too high or too low.

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Laughter: A Strong Antidote

Finally, there is an inexpensive, drug-free, and fun way to keep your heart healthy. Laughter can be strong medicine say researchers at Stanford University. Even the physical act is good for you. It increases blood flow and contracts abdominal muscles.

The most significant evidence of laughter's power comes from a study of heart attack patients. Half watched comedy shows for 30 minutes every day, the other half didn't. After a year, the laughers had one-fifth the number of repeat heart attacks that the control group had.

Doctors at the University of California, Irvine, say watching a humorous video decreases levels of two key stress hormones that can cause irregular heart rhythms. Heart disease patients are often given beta-blocking drugs that specifically block these hormones. The doctors say laughter does the same thing and is a lot more fun.

In other studies, laughter has been shown to help children and adults handle painful medical procedures.

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Parents Fail to See Obese Children

Parents fail to see overweight problems in their children, a British study finds. Researchers surveyed parents of 277 children in Britain and found only a quarter recognized when their offspring were overweight.

When children were obese, 33 % of mothers and 57% of fathers thought their sons and daughters were "about right," according to a study in the British Medical Journal. In addition, parents were less likely to recognize overweight boys than girls in the study.

The study authors say the findings also reveal some parents showed a lack of concern toward their children's weight problems.

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Meditation Helps Middle Schoolers

A Georgia study funded by the National Institutes of Health found 20 minutes of daily meditation lowered blood pressure and heart rates in middle schoolers.

The Medical College of Georgia team, in a study published in the latest edition of the journal Psychosomatic Medicine, discovered students who used a simple concentration-based breathing mediation technique had lower resting and "active" blood pressure readings.

The amount of reduction in blood pressure, if maintained over time, "would translate into an approximate 12.5 percent lower predicted risk of stroke or coronary mortality in adulthood," study author Frank A. Treiber says. Treiber and colleagues say the incidence of high blood pressure "has risen dramatically in recent years among youth," including a nearly sevenfold increase in high blood pressure among some minority youth.

The study included 73 Augusta middle school students randomly assigned to either meditation or a regular health education class. All students in the study had normal blood pressure and all wore monitors during the study to gauge their blood pressure and heart rate throughout the day. Students in the meditation group participated in two 10-minute meditation sessions each day, once in class and once after school, for three months.

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Battling Dry, Winter Skin

Cold air and dry heat often produce a common winter nuisance: dry skin. The skin loses moisture and may crack and peel, or become irritated and inflamed. Bathing too frequently, especially with harsh soaps, also contributes to dry skin. Eczema may also cause dry skin.

Dry skin is most common on your lower legs, arms, abdomen, and thighs. The symptoms most often associated with dry skin include:

- Scaling
- Itching
- Cracks in the skin

To relieve chronic dry skin, it may help to change your bathing habits:

- Keep baths or showers short.
- Use warm (not hot) water.
- Use as little soap as possible. Try mild cleansers like Aveeno or Cetaphil or mild soaps like Neutrogena or Dove.
- Dry your skin thoroughly but gently -- pat, don't rub.
- Take baths or showers less often.

It also helps to increase skin and body moisture:

- Use bath oils and moisturizers at least daily. Thick, greasy moisturizers work best. Avoid products with alcohol. Apply just after a bath or shower, when your skin is still damp.
- Use a humidifier if the air is dry.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated on the inside.
- Apply cool compresses to itchy areas, and try over-the-counter cortisone creams or lotions if your skin is inflamed. If this is not enough, talk to your doctor about possible prescription lotions.

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