



# Wellness Newsletter

## April is IBS Awareness Month

If you have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), you are not alone – IBS affects up to 10–15% of adults. IBS is a disorder characterized by abdominal pain or discomfort, and altered bowel habit (chronic or recurrent diarrhea, constipation, or both – either mixed or in alternation). Although IBS is not associated with an increased risk for life-threatening illness, it severely compromises a person’s quality of life. IBS is second only to the common cold as a cause of absenteeism from work. To learn more about IBS, go to [www.aboutibs.org](http://www.aboutibs.org). If you have symptoms of IBS you should seek medical attention for an accurate diagnosis.



## Essential Oils

Essential oils are fragrant oils made from plant or flower extracts that are applied to the skin and/or inhaled, in a practice known as “aromatherapy.” Aromatherapy is used to improve physical, emotional or spiritual well-being. Some oils may be effective for certain individuals, while causing problems for others. Before you use essential oils, talk to your healthcare provider about them, and watch for any skin irritations or other problems that may arise after use. Also note that essential oils, like perfumes,



release compounds in the air that can cause eye and lung irritation; people with asthma in particular should probably avoid them. Keep essential oils well out of reach of children and pets – even small amounts ingested by children may be fatal.

## Smoking - A Pain in the Neck

Smoking can damage the cervical discs in your neck. The discs, located between your vertebrae, absorb shock to the spine. They become dehydrated and shrink with age, and this degeneration can lead to neck pain.

Smoking seems to worsen this natural wear and tear. So if you are a smoker with neck pain, before you reach for the Advil, reach for your phone and call the NYS Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (697-8487.)



## Karen’s Wellness Corner

If you’re a fellow sufferer of GI problems, as I am, you already know that managing your condition can be perplexing. Here are a few things I’ve learned from my own journey with IBS:

- 1) Practice saying all those embarrassing words to describe your symptoms and body parts so you can be completely frank with your healthcare provider. They’ve heard it all before, and it doesn’t embarrass them at all.
- 2) If you eliminate a food and you feel worse over time, look at what you’re eating instead - it may be the substituted food that is a worse culprit.
- 3.) If you eliminate a favorite food, be open to the possibility of discovering other foods that satisfy you. And if you *believe* that day will come, it *will* come. (See next bullet.)
- 4.) Use positive self-talk! The more you tell yourself how horrible you feel, the worse you’ll feel. Here’s my morning mantra - I’ll let you steal it: *“I am settled and at peace within.”*
- 5.) There are a number of published diets out there for people with GI conditions. Keep trying them until you find the one that works best for you. Keep your doctor in the loop.
- 6.) It’s not all in your head, but, yes, stress will make your symptoms worse, so whatever you can do to reduce stress, give it your best shot. *All the best to you!*



Karen DeBonis  
R&K Wellness Director

## Low-volume, high-intensity interval training



That's a long name for a short exercise routine. These are very intense workouts with brief pauses between exercises, lasting a total of only five to ten minutes and repeated three to four times per week. These workouts can have surprising health benefits including improved aerobic capacity and cardiopulmonary health, improved glucose metabolism, and decreased body fat and blood lipids. What's the down side? They don't burn as many calories as typical routines, and they can be so intense that even fit people find them challenging. You'll want to get a doctor's clearance before giving these quick workouts a try.

Here are some tips to get the most of your low-volume high-intensity session:

- Make sure the workout is intense. The rests between exercises should be very brief (no more than 15 seconds) so that you keep up the intensity.
- Include a variety of exercises, especially if this is your only workout, so that you work a range of muscles including your core, and also get an aerobic workout.
- Alternate upper-body and lower-body exercises. Also alternate exercises that boost heart rate significantly (such as jumping squats) with those that let your heart rate come down somewhat (such as a stationary plank or triceps dips).
- Use proper form. This is important because it's easier to injure yourself when you're working out at such a fast clip. Consult with a fitness instructor if you're not sure about form.

## Healthy Body, Healthy Brain

Whether you can see retirement on your career horizon, or you have years of working still ahead, you can start now to

prepare for a healthy retirement. Your brain, as well as your body, will thank you for eating right, exercising and maintaining your health. Crossword puzzles, brain teasers, and continual learning all have a role in keeping your mind sharp. But that's not enough to keep your brain working at its best. Researchers believe that micro-strokes – tiny decreases in blood flow to the brain – can add up over time and affect the function of the brain. Keeping your brain and your body healthy and active maintains “brain reserve” – the ability of the brain to weather insults like aging. The more you build up your reserves, the less you may suffer from memory loss as you age. Be sure to add “eat right” and “stay active” to your retirement planning goals.



## Energy Drinks (Not)

Do you know what's in your energy drink? Lots of sugar, for starters – as much as 16 teaspoons per serving (and many containers hold more than 1 serving). For comparison, an average candy bar has 6-7 teaspoons of sugar. Energy drinks have lots of caffeine, too, which is often not shown on the label. Some energy drinks contain 240 milligrams of caffeine, as compared to about 100 milligrams of caffeine in a home-brewed cup of coffee.

Why should you be aware and possibly alarmed? Part of the concern about energy drinks is that people tend to guzzle them, so the caffeine (and other added stimulants) hit their systems quickly. This can make blood pressure spike, and cause a rapid pulse or abnormal heart rhythms. For adults who are sensitive to caffeine, or have certain heart conditions, this could be dangerous. For teens and children, it can be downright dangerous or even deadly. Also, the massive level of sugar in energy drinks may provide a quick burst of energy, but that is followed by a “crash” when the overproduction of insulin results in a drop in blood glucose.

So much for being energizing, huh?



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