

St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Health Ministry Health Link



1009 Stafford Ave., Fredericksburg, VA, 22401

<http://stmaryfred.org/>

(540) 373-6491

Hello St. Mary's Parishioners~ well, the Holiday Season is here again! Boy, doesn't it seem to come around earlier every year ☺! But it is a wonderful time for food, family and a time to revisit our love of the Blessed Birth of Our Savior! So many ways to celebrate this season and create wonderful warm memories that will carry through the generations. So, for this newsletter, let's talk about some health topics that may affect our eating habits and then the need to snooze after that big meal.

Our goal is to send you articles of interest that are related to a healthy lifestyle, disease and general interest ~ for all members of the family and all ages.

We hope you enjoy these communications and will let us know what topics are of special interest to you!

So let's get to the topics for this Newsletter. We will learn about **The Truth About Sugar Addiction**, **10 simple ways to eat less ☺**, **some healthy shopping tips**, **most interesting information on napping**, **gadgets that might help you sleep** and **a great sweet potato recipe** ~ and then, as the holidays continue on into the new year~ **how to spread the happiness virus!**

Let's Get to IT!!

Follow The Cross and Trust in Jesus



Healthy Shopping Tips

Here's an easy way to make sure every grocery excursion is a healthy one:

When you get home from the store, sit down with your receipt and three highlighter pens. Mark it up as follows.

Blue for every fresh food you purchased, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts like almonds, pecans, pistachios, lean meats, poultry, fish and eggs

Yellow to note all of the not-so-healthy packaged foods, including cookies, crackers and frozen pizza.

Pink for those better for you in between foods: Wholesome but packaged goods like Greek-style yogurt and instant brown rice, Low-fat or nonfat milk, cheese, and other dairy products

Do some research on "healthy food choices" to add to your personal list but don't "fudge" on your list ☺!

Ideally, at least 75% of the items in your cart should be **Blue** or **Pink!**

Health & weight-loss breakthroughs 2010: Self-care solutions to feel & be your best. (2010). United States: Rodale.

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10 Simple Ways To Eat Less

Chew gum in the grocery store.

Maybe you've heard you shouldn't shop for food when you're hungry. Well, you might want to pop in a piece of sugarless gum before you head down the aisles, too. While chewing gum, people felt less hungry and had fewer junk-food cravings, according to two studies. As a result, the people bought fewer high-calorie snack foods, like chips, and brought home more healthy options, like vegetables.

Serve yourself healthy stuff first.

Whether you're having a meal at home or choosing from a cafeteria line, load your plate with the healthiest items first. Diners at buffets tend to take larger servings of the first few foods they see, a study shows. So, think before you start piling up your plate. Dish up veggies or whole grains before fattier meats and sides.

Buy your lunch with cash.

It's easier to buy junk food and desserts when you pay with plastic. Something about handing over cold hard cash gives people pause. For instance, when high schoolers were told to use cash to pay for less-healthy foods like cookies, they thought twice about it, and often grabbed healthier fare, researchers found.

Turn off TV cooking shows!

If you're trying to lose weight, seeing food on TV could make you want to snack. People on diets eat more candy while watching food-related shows than when watching food-free programming, research shows.

Use blue plates.

Believe it or not, the color of your dishes might make a difference in how much food you serve yourself. The more the food blends in with the plate color, the more chow you're likely to take, research shows. So consider using plates in a different hue.

The Truth About Sugar Addiction

Can You Really Be Hooked on Sugar?

Some people use sugary foods in ways that aren't healthy, even though it may not be an actual addiction. Some signs: You crave sugar, lose control, and eat more than you planned.

Your Brain on Sugar

Sugar fuels every cell in the brain. Your brain also sees sugar as a reward, which makes you keep wanting more of it. If you often eat a lot of sugar, you're reinforcing that reward, which can make it tough to break the habit.

Quick Sugar Highs ...

Why do you get a rush when you eat a midday candy bar? The sugar in it -- called a simple carbohydrate -- is quickly turned into glucose in your bloodstream. Your blood sugar levels spike. Simple carbs are also found in fruits, veggies, and dairy products. But these have fiber and protein that slow the process. Syrup, soda, candy, and table sugar don't.

... And Sugar Lows

Your body needs to move glucose out of the bloodstream and into your cells for energy. To do this, your pancreas makes insulin, a hormone. As a result, your blood sugar level may have a sudden drop. This rapid change in blood sugar leaves you feeling wiped out and shaky and searching for more sweets to regain that sugar "high." So that midday candy bar has set you up for more bad eating.

Starch Can Equal Sugar

Think you don't have a sweet tooth, but crave bagels, chips, or french fries? These starchy foods are complex carbs that the body breaks down into simple sugars. Eaten without better foods, starches can make blood sugar surge and crash like sugar. White rice, white flour, and potatoes do this. Highly refined starches like white bread, pretzels, crackers, and pasta are worst.

Do Sugar Detox Diets Work?

Can you beat your sugar habit by quitting cold turkey? Some sugar detox plans urge you to avoid all sweets. That means all fruit, dairy, and refined grains. The idea is to purge your system of sugar. Diet changes like this are too drastic to keep up. Changes that you can do only for the short term mean you'll fall back to your old habits.

Use smaller bowls and plates.

The size of your dishes and utensils gives your brain cues about how much you're "supposed" to eat -- and a bigger dish means more food. In one study, people at a Chinese buffet who got a large plate served themselves 52% more food, and ate 45% more, than those with smaller plates.

Hit the pause button before giving in to a craving.

Eating because you're bored, tired, or tense can make you feel out of control. Try to delay the urge to graze: When a craving hits, do something else for 5 to 10 minutes, then see if you still want to eat. Chances are, the urge will have faded, at least a little.

Keep unhealthy snacks out of sight.

Stash junk foods like candy and chips where you can't see them. You might eat less. When office workers kept chocolates on their desks, they ate 48% more than when the candies were 6 feet away. If they put chocolates in their desk drawers, they ate 25% less than if the sweet stuff was on their desks.

Always order the "small."

A large container can tempt you to eat more food, even if you're full or it doesn't taste good. In one study, moviegoers were given free popcorn in either medium or large tubs -- some was fresh and yummy, and some was stale. People given the fresh stuff in large containers ate 45% more than those who got it in medium tubs did. Even those who got stale popcorn in large containers ate 33% more than those with medium tubs of it.

Eat slowly, and drink water.

Take smaller bites. Chew your food slowly. Take a little more time between forkfuls. And drink water while you're eating. These simple steps are key if you want to cut back on calories and still feel full, research shows.

http://www.webmd.com/diet/ss/slideshow-10-ways-to-control-eating?ecd=wnl_wmh_101915&ctr=wnl-wmh-101915_nsl-ld-stry_title&mb=hVcDxSj3UrzSXjRWSwOQwRXFE73IOX1ccZOOrsOZN4g4%3d

Retrain Your Taste Buds

You don't need sugar as much as you think you do. In fact, you can train your taste buds to enjoy things that aren't as sweet. Try cutting out one sweet food from your diet each week. For example, pass on dessert after dinner. Start putting less sugar in your coffee or cereal. Over time, you will lose your need for that sugar taste.

Choose Good-for-You Sweets

You don't have to give up sweetness. Just get it from other sources. Try fresh berries or pureed fruit on oatmeal instead of sugar. Explore fruit that's dried, frozen, or canned (without too much added sugar). A glass of low-fat milk or low-sugar yogurt can help.

Kick the Habit in Baby Steps

If you make small, simple changes to your diet, it's easy to keep them up. Start by eating more fruits and vegetables. Drink extra water. Check food labels, and pick those that don't have a lot of sugar. Cut out a little bit of sugar each week. After a few weeks, you'll be surprised at how little you miss it.

Let Protein Help

Eating protein is an easy way to curb sugar cravings. High-protein foods digest more slowly, keeping you feeling full for longer. Protein doesn't make your blood sugar spike the way refined carbs and sugars do. Pick proteins like lean chicken, low-fat yogurt, eggs, nuts, or beans.

Fill Up on Fiber

Fiber helps fight a sugar itch in many ways. First, it keeps you full. High-fiber foods also give you more energy. Because they don't raise your blood sugar, there's no hungry crash after. Choose fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Or smear some peanut butter on an apple for a protein/fiber combo.

Get Outside

Exercise can help wipe out those sugar cravings and change the way you eat in general. You start to feel better and want healthier foods. Do what you like, such as walking, riding your bike, or swimming. Start out slow, and work toward at least 30 minutes at a time, 5 days a week.

Can Artificial Sweeteners Help?

Some studies suggest artificial sweeteners may leave you craving *more* sugar. That could make it harder to control your weight. The problem is, some experts say, that artificial sweeteners don't help you break your taste for sweets. Pay attention to your body. Are sweeteners making you crave even more sugar? If so, look elsewhere for that sweet taste.

Will a Gadget Help You Sleep?

Sleep apps, alarm clocks, white noise machines, sleep monitors, and more.

You can't **sleep**, so you turn on the white noise machine, slip on an **eye** mask, and spritz some lavender spray into the air. Will you nab some shut-**eye** now? Maybe -- but maybe not.

We crave **sleep**, and yet most of us don't get enough of it. Those who try often don't get a quality snooze. In fact, 43% of Americans between the ages of 13 and 64 say they rarely or never get a good night's sleep on weeknights, according to a recent poll by the National Sleep Foundation.

Many people look to gadgets to help them get their ZZZs, but fun as they might be, they're no substitute for good sleep habits like going to bed at the same time every night, minimizing **caffeine**, and relaxing before **bedtime**.

"Gadgets can be helpful, but their effectiveness does not supersede sleep awareness and good sleep and circadian hygiene," says Gianluca Tosini, MD, director of the Circadian Rhythm and **Sleep Disorders** Program at the Neuroscience Institute and chairman of the department of pharmacology at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta.

Still, some devices can help, or at least trigger a sleep-inducing effect. Here's a look at some of the high- and low-tech gadgets and devices that can promote sound sleep.

Shut Out the Noise

For most people, a quiet room is essential to a good night's sleep. But getting that peace and quiet isn't always easy. Here are some gadgets that might help:

White noise machines and apps. Whether it's the sounds of rain, the crackle of thunder, or the pounding of horse's hooves, white noise can help you tune out the sounds that can disrupt sleep. "White noise is ideal to help block noise," says Shelby Freedman Harris, PsyD, director of the Behavioral Sleep Medicine Program Sleep-Wake Disorders Center at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. Harris says she prefers machines to apps because the noise on machines is gentler.

Music. Playing music that relaxes you may promote better sleep. Helene Emsellem, MD, director of the Center for Sleep and Wake Disorders in Bethesda, Md., and author of *Snooze or Lose: 10 No-War Ways to Improve Your Teen's Sleep Habits*, recommends creating a playlist on your MP3 player of soothing songs, be it hard rock, the blues or jazz -- whatever relaxes you.

Ear plugs. They're cheap and easy, and they actually work, experts say. "I have many patients who use earplugs to block the noise of **snoring** bed partners," Harris says. "Silicone earplugs are often better at blocking noise than the usual foam ones"

Limit the 'Healthy' Sugars, Too

Honey, brown sugar, and cane juice may sound healthy. But sugar is sugar. Whether it comes from bees or sugar cane, it can cause your blood sugar to rise. Honey and unrefined sugars are slightly higher in nutrients, but their calories still count.

How Much Sugar Is Too Much?

If you're like most people in the U.S., you eat 19 teaspoons or more of added sugar a day. That adds up to 285 calories, which health experts say is way too much. How much sugar should you be eating? No more than 6 teaspoons daily for women. That's 100 calories. Men should get a max of 9 teaspoons. That's 150 calories.

Sugar by Any Other Name

You don't always see the word "sugar" on a food label. It sometimes goes by another name, like these: Agave nectar / Brown rice syrup/ High-fructose corn syrup/ Dextrose/ Evaporated cane juice/ Glucose/ Lactose /Malt syrup/ Molasses/ Sucrose ~~~ Watch out for items that list any form of sugar in the first few ingredients, or have more than 4 total grams of sugar.

Scout Out Hidden Sugar

Sugar can hide in foods where you least expect it. Although they don't seem sweet, ketchup, barbecue sauce, and pasta sauce can have loads of sugar. So can reduced-fat salad dressings, bread, baked beans, and some flavored coffees. Get in the habit of reading labels. Filter out high-sugar foods before they hit your shopping cart.

Does Sugar Cause Diabetes?

Sugar itself doesn't cause diabetes. But lots of sugar splurges can point you there. Too much of anything, including sugar, can pack on pounds, for one thing. Heavy bodies have a harder time using insulin, the hormone that controls blood sugar. When your body resists insulin, blood sugar and your risk of diabetes go up.

http://www.webmd.com/diet/ss/slideshow-sugar-addiction?ecd=wnl_din_102915&ctr=wnl-din-102915_nsl-id-stry_img&mb=hVcDxSj3UrzSXjRWSwOQwRXFE73IOX1ccZOrsOZN4g4%3d# THIS TOOL DOES NOT PROVIDE MEDICAL ADVICE. It is intended for general informational purposes only and does not address individual circumstances.

Know Your Sleep

In a society that craves information, some people want to know exactly how well they're sleeping. That's where sleep monitors come in. These devices can tell you what stage of sleep you're in at 3 a.m., exactly how much sleep you're getting, and the best time to get up.

Knowing your patterns can help you structure the time you get up so you aren't awakened during a deep sleep, Emsellem says. "But you have to have an idea why you want that information."

For instance, if you're someone who frequently wakes up feeling unrefreshed, these devices may help you understand why.

But before you buy one of these gadgets, which can cost several hundred dollars, try going to bed at the same time every night and getting up at the same time every morning, Emsellem says. These sleep monitors are different from sleep wristbands, for example, which give you an idea of how much you sleep, but can't tell you how deep your sleep is.

A Proper Awakening

For some people, rising isn't exactly a shining moment. Enter smart alarm clocks that will get you out of bed in a way that suits your waking style.

If you're prone to hitting the snooze button and [oversleeping](#), you might want to consider alarm clocks that force you to get out of bed to turn them off.

"These are very novel and are effective for people who shut off their alarms and do not remember them going off," says Robert Oexman, DC, director of the Sleep to Live Institute in Joplin, Mo. "The amount of time it takes to shut off their alarm from across the room will allow sufficient time to wake up."

But if you prefer a gentle nudge, you might consider an alarm clock that rouses you with nature sounds or that light up gradually and mimic the sunrise. "Some patients feel more comfortable with gradual light and are traumatized by abrupt light," Emsellem says. "If you have a 5:30 wake-up time, having the light come on gradually can be relief."

If you're the type who hates being roused from a deep sleep, consider a watch or clock that monitors your movement and wakes you up when you're not in a deep sleep. "People often report waking up at the conclusion of a [dream](#) and not during the [dream](#)," Oexman says.

All in the Ambience

A comfortable room goes a long way toward good sleep. Among the ways to create more comfort:

Lavender. For years, lavender has been touted as a relaxing scent that can induce sleep. A 2005 study at Wesleyan University found that people who took a sniff of lavender got better sleep than people who smelled distilled water. "The reason this works is poorly understood, but it may act as a relaxant prior to sleep," Oxeman says. He recommends using lavender-scented bath salts, shampoo or lotions, or burning lavender incense 30 minutes before [bedtime](#). Not a fan of lavender? Find a scent that does soothe you, Emsellem says.

Maple-Roasted Sweet Potatoes

Roasting sweet potatoes is even easier than boiling and mashing them. Maple syrup glaze transforms this ultra-simple dish into something sublime.

Ingredients

Prep: 10 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

2 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces (about 8 cups)
1/3 cup pure maple syrup or, preferably, sugar free maple syrup
2 tablespoons butter, melted
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Arrange sweet potatoes in an even layer in a 9-by-13-inch glass baking dish. Combine maple syrup, butter, lemon juice, salt and pepper in small bowl. Pour the mixture over the sweet potatoes; toss to coat.

Cover and bake the sweet potatoes for 15 minutes.

Uncover, stir and cook, stirring every 15 minutes, until tender and starting to brown, 45 to 50 minutes more.

Nutritional Information

Serving Size: 1/2 cup

Makes: 12 servings

Calories 113 Fat 2 g Saturated fat 1 g
Mono Fat 0 g Cholesterol 5 mg
Carbohydrates 23 g Dietary fiber 3 g
Protein 1 g Sodium 149 mg Potassium 340 mg

http://www.webmd.com/parenting/raising-fit-kids/food/maple-roasted-sweet-potatoes?ecd=wnl_dab_110115&ctr=wnl-dab-110115_nsl-id-stry_cta&mb=hVcDxSj3UrzSXjRWSwOQwRXFE73IOX1ccZOrsOZN4g4%3d

Eye masks. Too much light suppresses the production of [melatonin](#), a hormone essential to initiating and maintaining sleep, Oexman says. "Eye masks are a great tool in eliminating light sources - such as external light and lights from alarm clocks and night lights -- and increasing quality of sleep," he says. "Eye masks are a great therapy when traveling and staying in rooms where light sources cannot be controlled." Just make sure to use one that fits comfortably. "If it's uncomfortable, it's more likely to have an opposite effect," Tosini says.

Room colors. When it comes to sleep, certain colors are definitely more soothing than others. "The bedroom should be a calming and inviting environment," Harris says. "The best colors for this include soft blues and purples, and warm neutrals." If you like bright colors such as yellow, go for a softer shade, which can be more calming, she says.

<http://www.webmd.com/women/features/sleep-gadgets-apps-tips>

Got 60 Minutes for a Nap? How About 6?

It's 2 p.m. and you're tired. You've been busting your you-know-what since midmorning, and even though you have hours left in your day, you're mentally and physically exhausted. But what if we told you there was a way to refresh and recharge -- that taking a nap could help perk you up, plus it could boost your memory, creativity and even lower your [blood pressure](#)? So could you spare 90 minutes? No? What about 60 minutes? Or 25, 10, or 6? Yes, really -- six minutes. And there's no hard-and-fast rule for how long you're out. Napping for almost any amount of time has its benefits, so check out this guide (and your schedule) to see what nap length will best work for you and when.

90 Minutes

Ninety-minute naps are great -- if you can afford to take the time. [Sleep](#) cycles run in 90-minute patterns, taking us back and forth between lighter and deeper [sleep](#). Most of us have between four and six [sleep](#) cycles a night, so if you can manage to take a 90-minute nap, you're getting an entire sleep cycle. After awakening from one of these epic naps, you'll likely be more mentally focused and productive, plus you'll probably notice a boost to your physical energy and feel more balanced emotionally.

60 Minutes

Unlike hour-and-a-half-long naps, 60-minute naps don't allow you to finish a complete sleep cycle, so they can leave you feeling a little weary. But if you have the time (lunch break, anyone?) they're usually still worth it. According to Michael Breus, a fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and one of upwave's sleep experts, 60-minute naps can help improve memory-related tasks. "Sixty-minute naps improve memory," he says, "though because they can make you groggy, taking a shorter nap is usually a better option."

30 To 45 Minutes

In a 2008 study, 45-minute naps helped lower the blood pressure of patients of participants facing psychological stress. But there's a downside. "Naps longer than 30 minutes will likely cause sleep [inertia](#)," says Russell Sanna, Ph.D., the executive director at the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School and an upwave sleep expert. "Scientists tell us longer naps can cause grogginess."

10 To 20 Minutes

This is arguably the most effective nap length (unless you have an hour and a half to spare, of course). Ten- to 20-minute naps will help you perk up with little to no grogginess, so you can rally throughout the afternoon and don't have to worry about crashing later. In a study of first-year medical students, brief afternoon naps improved the mental acuity and alertness of participants, which are benefits we could all use a little more of.

Breus is a fan of 25-minute naps. "Twenty-five-minute naps work best," he says, "because you get actual rest, which reduces the body's need for sleep without causing the sleep inertia that comes with 30-minute and longer naps."

6 Minutes

If you're flagging in the afternoon, taking a six-minute snoozer will likely perk you up, as super-short naps are thought to improve alertness and memory. One study found that "a sleep episode as short as six minutes was enough to significantly boost memory performance." And we're talking declarative, or long-term memory, meaning that you'll have an easier time tomorrow remembering what you did today. All after just six minutes of shuteye.

But it's important to remember that a six-minute nap can't take the place of a proper night's rest. "Six-minute power naps are helpful if you're getting [enough sleep](#)," Breus says, "but if you're sleep deprived, they probably won't be enough. Your body needs more rest." *So if you're getting sleepy-eyed, take a short (or a long) snooze. We'll still be here when you wake up, and you'll probably feel better for it.*

http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/features/got-60-minutes-for-a-nap-how-about-6?ecd=wnl_slw_102915&ctr=wnl-slw-102915_nsl-promo-1_title&mb=hVcDxSj3UrzSXjRWSwOQwRXFE73IOX1ccZOrsOZN4g4%3d

Spread the Happiness Virus

Jotting down just five things you're grateful for every day can lead to a healthier mental state, research shows. Write it in the morning, review it in the afternoon and before bed!

A Message from Vera~

About every 2 months, I call a local grocery store with a bread order to be picked up the next day. Last week, when I called in the evening and started telling the lady what I wanted, she interrupted with "Is this Vera?" I laughed and asked how she knew. She answered, "Oh, I know you well!" As seldom as I call, this lady knew my voice and recognized my order.

It started me thinking about my prayer life, and that no matter how often or seldom I turn to God in prayer, He knows my name and just what I need. He listens to me patiently and then supplies what is best for me, even if it isn't exactly what I asked for.

This week, may you be encouraged and strengthened by realizing that God knows YOU and what is best for you~

Blessings, Vera

Cada dos meses, llamo a la tienda local, y hago un pedido de pan, para recogerlo al día siguiente. La semana pasada, llame por la tarde y empecé a decirle a la dependienta lo que necesitaba, pero ella me interrumpió y dijo: "es usted Vera"? Me reí y le pregunte como es que ella sabia. Me contesto: "Oh, yo la conozco bien". A pesar de que hablo de vez en cuando, ella reconoció mi voz y mi pedido.

Esto me hizo pensar acerca de mi vida de oración, y que no importa cuan seguido me dirija a Dios en oración, El sabe mi nombre y lo que necesito. El me escucha pacientemente, y me da lo que necesito, aunque algunas veces, no sea exactamente lo que pido.

Esta semana, encuentra fuerza y aliento por el solo echo de saber que Dios te conoce por TU nombre, y lo que es mejor para ti.

Bendiciones, Vera