

FALL 2000

## Obstacle or Opportunity?

**I**n ancient times, a king had a boulder placed in the middle of a well-traveled road. He then sat in his castle and watched to see if anyone would move the huge stone. Wealthy merchants, citizens of the kingdom, and even friends of the king simply walked around it. Many cursed loudly and blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but no one did anything about moving the stone out of the way. After a time a peasant approached. On seeing the boulder, he laid down the heavy load he was carrying and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. Time passed and after much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. When the peasant picked up his things to continue on his way, he noticed a purse lying where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king. The note stated that the gold was a reward for whomever removed the boulder, for that person was a true citizen of the kingdom. The peasant, rich with gold, was richer still for the lesson he learned: obstacles may lead to unexpected rewards.

During this busy time of year, there may be many “obstacles” in our way. Final exams, preparation for upcoming holidays, commitments to extracurricular activities, conflicts with friends, lack of sleep, and other problems can seem overwhelming. Whether they are “obstacles” or “opportunities,” however, is largely up to us. One thing for sure: the healthier we are, the more likely we are to see the opportunities our challenges present. Use the tips in this issue to stay healthy—be well: inside and out!

*“I believe the greatest gift I can conceive of having from anyone is to be seen by them, heard by them, to be understood and touched by them. The greatest gift I can give is to see, hear, understand and to touch another person. When this is done I feel contact has been made.”*

—Virginia Satir



**S**leep is a time when the body rests and restores itself. It's a recognized fact that not getting enough sleep, or worse yet, pulling frequent “all-nighters,” interferes with concentration, memory, energy, and our overall health. While it's not always possible to get the amount of sleep we really need, it's a good idea to get into good sleep habits.

Tips for a Good Night's Sleep:

- Stop all caffeine (soda, coffee, tea) several hours before bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom cool and dark.
- Don't use your bedroom for other activities, such as studying or watching TV.
- Exercise no later than several hours before bed.
- Finish a big meal at least three hours before sleep.
- Have set sleep and wake times; don't vary them by more than an hour, even on weekends.

THIS ISSUE

ECSTASY • STRESS • SEX  
FLU SEASON

# insideout



A guide to better health published by **Education for Health and Wellness**

## ARE YOU SERIOUS?

In the state of Maryland, anyone who is impaired (mentally challenged, asleep, under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs, etc.) is unable to give consent to having sexual intercourse or other sexual activities. It is important that students, especially men, understand that having sex with anyone who is drunk (or otherwise impaired) is considered rape in the state of Maryland. This is true even if both parties are drunk/drugged. The male is considered responsible and can be charged with rape. Is this fair? Obviously, that's another question. The bottom line is: that's the law! Anyone, male or female, who chooses to use any mind-altering substance should be aware of potential consequences. Take care of yourself and also look out for your friends.

*"The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference."*  
—Anonymous

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT ECSTASY?

Ecstasy (also called MDMA, X, XTC, E and ADAM) is a drug. Chemically similar to amphetamines ("speed") and the hallucinogen mescaline, it's become popular in the club scene as the fuel of choice for all night dancing and easy socializing.

Ecstasy is classified by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration as a drug with high potential for abuse and no recognized therapeutic value, making it illegal to make, sell, or possess. At the same time, it has been praised by psychiatrists and hailed as a "love drug" by users. Until 1985, it was legal in the United States.

### THE BASICS

To a chemist, ecstasy is N-methyl-3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, a chemical in the phenethylamine category. A similar drug was first synthesized by the Merck chemical company in 1917 as an appetite suppressant. Merck was discouraged by the psychological effects of the drug, and it was forgotten until it resurfaced in the 1960s and 1970s.

Technically classified as a hallucinogenic amphetamine, ecstasy has about the same physical effects as other amphetamines: euphoria, excitability, nervousness, fast heart-beat, sweating, dizziness, restlessness, insomnia, etc. In short, it produces every sign of a heavily overstimulated brain and nervous system.

The drug is usually taken orally (by mouth) in doses of 50–150 mg, although it can be smoked, snorted

or injected. An average dose costs about \$7–\$30. Once it's taken by mouth, the effects usually take about 30 minutes to appear, and can last four to six hours.

The psychological effects of ecstasy are different from those of other amphetamines and hallucinogens. MDMA (ecstasy) does not produce the violent hallucinations of LSD or PCP, nor does it lead to the "out of body" experience common with the drug ketamine. Changes in perception are usually limited to slight visual distortions and a variety of strange, but usually not troubling, sensations. Users of MDMA have said that they feel a general "happy" sensation and that "all is right with the world."

MDMA gained its reputation as a "love drug" because of its other major effect—increased feelings of empathy and closeness with others. This can lead to a breakdown of social inhibitions, making small talk happen easily, even for people who are normally shy. People on ecstasy are known to hug and touch frequently, because the effects of the drug make these sensations very pleasant.

### BWARE THE BATHTUB CHEMIST

The big problem with ecstasy is that it may not be MDMA at all. "Regular" amphetamines, LSD, PCP, and even more exotic drugs, have all been marketed as ecstasy. In addition, a crude chemical synthesis or bungling chemist can leave all sorts of unwanted by-products and contaminants. A simple chemical

test can be used to distinguish between ecstasy and methamphetamine (speed), but other contaminants cannot be determined without sophisticated laboratory testing.

### "HERBAL" DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN GOOD!

Lately, herbal drugs have become very popular...so popular that many people associate the term "herbal" with "good" and "no side effects." There are now quite a few concoctions being marketed as "herbal ecstasy" which can cause a lot of problems. While the mixtures may be completely legal, depending on their contents, their composition is often poorly controlled and the effects of the drugs are not well understood.

### THERE'S ALWAYS A DOWNSIDE

Since ecstasy is a drug, it is possible to overdose. Also, the body quickly builds up tolerance, and the effects of the drug diminish unless larger doses are taken. The larger danger of ecstasy is that it can make the user lose touch with the body's basic needs. Users in all-night dances and raves have been known to die of hyperthermia (overheating), caused by overexertion with no rest and not enough water. Because ecstasy is popular in clubs, there's also the danger of mixing it with other drugs—which can be extremely dangerous! Recent studies suggest that ecstasy causes permanent neurological damage. And, ecstasy can kill you!

Andrew McAlevey, Webmaster  
Education for Health & Wellness

## WHAT'S YOUR "EQ"?

Our ultimate success and happiness in life will more likely be determined by how we interact with others, and how well we respond to situations,

than by how "smart" we are. In his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Daniel Goldman characterizes "emotional intelligence" (EQ) as:

- The ability to monitor and manage one's emotions
- The ability to motivate one's self toward a goal
- The ability to have empathy for others
- The ability to handle relationships and conflict well

While IQ is pretty much static, there are many things we can do to increase our EQ.

Working on our communication skills, actually listening to others, learning stress management techniques, visiting the Career Center for assistance with career decisions, or talking to a counselor in the Counseling Center are only some of the ways we can enhance or develop skills which enrich our lives.

Students who wish to reduce their flu risk may call the Student Health and Wellness Center at 410-516-8270 to schedule an appointment for a flu shot.

## A STUDENT ASKS:

*I don't like eating in the dining halls and I'm considering becoming a vegetarian. How can I make sure I am eating well?*

### ANSWER:

Many college students have a hard time getting the nutrients they need. Aside from the fact that "institutional foods" can never measure up to Mom's cooking, hectic and irregular schedules further contribute to the dilemma of making wise dietary choices. Also, food prepared in large quantities can be less appealing because different people have different tastes. You may like a particular spice, your classmates may not. The result: food may be more bland or less tasty than you like.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You may choose to go vegetarian. This is a growing trend as students make lifestyle or religious choices regarding meat. However, without proper education, going "meatless" can be harmful to your health. Vegetarianism means eating mostly plant foods. Including dairy products in an eating plan makes it easier to meet most nutrient needs. If you're a vegan—you eat only plant foods, no eggs or dairy products—you may need to supplement with calcium, iron, zinc and vitamins B12 and D.

Supplements may be needed because certain nutrients are lacking in, or cannot be absorbed from, plant foods. Eating some animal foods—especially dairy foods—can provide many of these nutrients. Getting adequate iron, however, can be difficult. Plant foods have iron, but it is not well absorbed so an iron supplement may be needed.

If you think vegetarianism is the way to go, it's a good idea to talk to your health care provider, a registered dietitian, or call our office at 410-516-8396. Most important, remember that what you eat will help or hinder your success!

## ••••• UNDER THE WEATHER? •••••

### THE SKINNY ON COLDS

In addition to the holiday season, the flu season is just around the corner. Influenza, or flu, is a viral illness characterized by abrupt onset of fever, sore throat, and non-productive cough. Unlike other common respiratory infections, influenza can cause extreme malaise lasting several days. Healthy college students usually re-cover from influenza without complications.

Sometimes colds are mistaken for the flu. Like the flu, they are caused by viruses but there is no vaccine to prevent them. They, too, can slow us down and make us feel miserable. Colds can last from five to 10 days, but accompanying coughs may last longer.

**Home care:** Use aspirin or aspirin substitutes to treat fever or discomfort. Rest and drink plenty of fluids. The Health Center can provide or recommend over-the-counter

medications. Do NOT rely on TV commercials for advice.

Whether battling the flu or a cold, call the Health Center (410-516-8270) anytime you have:

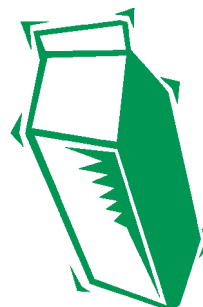
- A temperature over 102 degrees F
- Difficult/painful breathing
- Chest pain
- Green, brown, or red mucus from nose or from cough
- Stiff neck, diarrhea or vomiting that lasts more than eight hours
- Any other symptoms that worry you

### TRUE OR FALSE?

*When you stop exercising, muscle turns to fat.*

False. Unused muscles will shrink in mass but will not turn into fat. Fat and muscle are distinct types of body tissue. If you stop exercising and maintain the same caloric intake you will gain fat, some of which will be around muscles.

Source: Learning Seed, Fall 2000



### A BETTER SKIM

Have you noticed that skim milk seems a little thicker than it used to? It's not your imagination. Some companies add extra nonfat milk solids so skim milk tastes more like the full fat version. (Apparently, translucent milk was less appealing!)

Source: Learning Seed, Fall 2000

## SOFT DRINK ALERT

Despite continued health warnings against sugar, aspartame, saccharin, and caffeine, soft drinks are ahead of water as the nation's most heavily consumed beverage. Of the 182.5 gallon yearly consumption for an average individual, soft drinks now represent 44.5 gallons, followed by water (44.3 gallons), coffee (26.3 gallons), beer (23.8 gallons), and milk (20.1 gallons). Tea, juice, wine, and other alcoholic beverages make up the other 23.5 gallons.

Soft drinks are nothing more than a sweet source of liquid. They contain large amounts of sugar, artificial sweeteners, or caffeine, all of which can be harmful to your health.

If you wash down a food that contains calcium with soft drinks containing phosphoric acid, the phosphorus will block your absorption of the calcium. Consider drinking water, milk or juice with meals. Save the sodas for other times.

*Adapted from: Myron Winick, MD, R.R. Williams Professor of Nutrition and Pediatrics, and director, Institute of Human Nutrition, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.*

## ARE YOU CONTROLLING YOUR STRESS?

Stress is linked to problems ranging from poor immunity to low academic achievement to general malaise. It can also be a killer. When school and other demands begin to overwhelm you, it's time to design your own personal stress-reduction program. Suggestions:

- **Avoid self-absorption.** Everyone else is also busy and stressed. Enlist help from TAs, get a tutor or a study partner, respect friends' need to get their work done, and set limits on how much and when others can interrupt you.
- **Control frustration and anger.** Take "time-outs." Walk away from frustrating or hostile situations and take 30 minutes to take a walk, do easy work, run an errand, or talk to an objective third-person.
- **Tune-in to body tension.** Sit back, unclench your knuckles and jaw, release the tension in your legs, and stretch your shoulders and neck. Exercise regularly.
- **Calm your mind.** Stress-management methods including biofeedback, prayer, visualization of peaceful scenes, and taking walks can ease stress.
- **Act.** Obsessing about how much you have to do is a waste of time. Pick one thing that you need to do and DO IT! Then do another thing, and another....

## Looking For Something Better To Skip Than Classes?

Try skipping rope. It's three times more effective as an exercise for the cardiovascular system than jogging. (Ten minutes of skipping rope produces the health benefits of a half-hour jog.)

This kind of exercise provides a hardy workout. Start slowly.

### Procedure:

The right length rope is long enough to reach from armpit to armpit when you stand on it. The heavier the rope, the easier it is to manipulate.

Jump only high enough for the rope to slip under your feet. Land lightly on the balls of your feet.

Wear sneakers or padded exercise shoes.

At first, jump easily until you feel winded. Don't exceed three minutes of jumping.

**Goal:** To jump for longer periods of time without resting. (10 to 15 minutes of continuous exercise is ideal). To reach it, increase the time of continuous jumping by a minute a week. Cool down with stretching exercises.

## TIPS FOR CONSUMING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

The legal age for consuming alcoholic beverages is 21. If you are of age and choose to drink alcohol, consider the following:

- ‡ **Pace your drinks.** The body can metabolize only one drink an hour (12 oz. beer, 4 oz. wine, 1 oz. hard liquor).
- ‡ **Always drink water before drinking alcohol.** This will hydrate you prior to alcohol consumption.
- ‡ **Alternate drinking water, soda, or juice with alcoholic drinks.**
- ‡ **If you drink hard liquor (vodka, gin, rum, or whiskey), dilute with nutrient-dense fruit juices and lots of ice.** The fruit juices and ice provide needed water, vitamins, and minerals that are normally lost due to the dehydrating effects of alcohol.
- ‡ **Eat food when you are drinking alcohol.** (Avoid salty snacks such as popcorn, chips, etc., which only make you thirstier).

Most alcohol-related consequences (getting raped or mugged; having unsafe or regretted sex; damaging property; legal problems...) can be avoided by watching out for yourself and your friends.

## TALKING ABOUT SAFER SEX

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancies are almost completely preventable by practicing safer sex. Talking about sex with your partner is the first step in STD and pregnancy prevention. Although bringing up the subject can be hard, sharing responsibility for protecting yourselves can make you both feel more relaxed, closer and certainly safer.

### BRINGING UP THE SUBJECT

Learn as much as you can about safer sex practices. The more you know, the more comfortable you'll be discussing it. Sort out your own feelings and fears before you begin. What sexual activities are you comfortable with? Oral sex? Anal sex?

Decide when to bring up the subject. It may be easier to talk when you're not feeling romantic and ready to make love. Think about what you want to say. You could begin with, "I need to talk about something that's important to both of us. It's hard for me, but I think we need to talk about safer sex." Or, "I'm worried about STDs. What do you think we should do to protect ourselves?"

Most important, make up your mind that you are going to be safe. Tell your partner clearly and directly that you won't have unprotected sex.

Remember that alcohol affects emotions. Even one drink can make people feel more relaxed and at the same time, affect their judgment. Unwanted and unsafe sex is often the result.

Consider: If it's too uncomfortable or embarrassing discussing sex with your partner, you may want to reconsider having sex in the first place.

*"At the heart of each of us, whatever our imperfections, there exists a silent pulse of perfect rhythm, a complex of wave forms and resonances, which is absolutely individual and unique, and yet which connects us to everything in the universe."*

*Source: George Leonard in "The Silent Pulse"*

**SURE CURE FOR HICCUPS: HOLD SOME ICE CUBES OR A COLD CAN OF SODA AGAINST EITHER SIDE OF YOUR ADAM'S APPLE FOR ABOUT ONE MINUTE. THE COLD STOPS HICCUPS BY REDUCING THE FIRING RATE OF THE NERVE THAT CAUSES THE DIAPHRAGM TO SPASM.**  
—Greg Hipskind, MD, Ph.D.