



WELLNESS WORKS

around the state

MAINE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH TRUST

SPRING 2007

Top Ten Ways to Help Children Develop Healthy Habits

What gets in the way of kids practicing good health as they grow? Peer pressure, failing to make the right choices, staying inside watching TV or using the computer, lack of supervision and lack of time. It's up to the family to help children overcome these hurdles to good health. Below are ten ways to help children develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime!

1. Be a positive role model. If you're practicing healthy habits, it's a lot easier to convince children to do the same.
2. Get the whole family active. Plan times for everyone to get moving together. Take walks, ride bikes, go swimming, garden or just play hide-and-seek outside. Everyone will benefit from the exercise and the time together.
3. Limit TV, video games and computer time. These habits lead to a sedentary lifestyle and excessive snacking, which increase risks for obesity and cardiovascular disease.
4. Encourage physical activities that children really enjoy. Every child is unique. Let children experiment with different activities until each finds something that he or she really loves doing. They'll stick with it longer if they love it.
5. Be supportive. Focus on the positive instead of the negative. Everyone likes to be praised for a job well done. Celebrate successes and help children and teens develop a good self-image.
6. Set specific goals and limits, such as one hour of physical activity a day or two desserts a week other than fruit. When goals are too abstract or limits too restrictive, the chance for success decreases.
7. Don't reward children with food. Candy and snacks as a reward encourage bad habits. Find other ways to celebrate good behavior.
8. Make dinnertime, family time. When everyone sits down together to eat, there's less chance of children eating the wrong foods or snacking too much. Get the kids involved with cooking and planning meals. Everyone develops good eating habits together and the quality time with the family will be an added bonus.
9. Make a game of reading food labels. The whole family will learn what's good for their health and be more conscious of what they eat. It's a habit that helps change behavior for a lifetime.
10. Stay involved. Be an advocate for healthier children. Insist on good food choices at school. Make sure your children's healthcare providers are monitoring cardiovascular indicators like BMI, blood pressure and cholesterol.

Source: American Heart Association

"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."
— Author Unknown



Spring 2007

What's Inside:

- Tips for Weight Training & Why It Helps Get Your Body in Shape 2
- Lending Library 2
- The History and Benefits of Nordic Walking 3
- Leave Extra Baggage at Home ... 3
- Pay Attention to Your Heart After a Heart Attack 3
- Caffeinated Compost 4
- Making Your Calories Count 4
- How to Avoid Ankle Sprains While Exercising 4
- Electrolytes – What Are They and Why Do Some of Us Benefit From Them? 4
- “On-Call” 5
- Navigating Your Way Around the Health Trust Website 6
- Five Memory Boosting Techniques 7
- Chain Saw Safety 7
- Zap Those Kitchen Germs 7
- Newsletter Search Contest 8

Did you know...
Walking 3 miles an hour uphill burns 50 to 75 percent more calories than walking at that pace without any incline.

Tips for Weight Training & Why It Helps Get Your Body in Shape

This is the Year of Fitness. Now more than ever, people are realizing they need to take better care of themselves. The “experts” tell us that more than half of the people in this country are overweight, and many people are looking in the mirror and not liking what they see. With the risk of heart disease and clogged arteries, many people are finding ways to put some sort of exercise into their day.

In addition to diet, another excellent way to get the body into shape, strengthening the muscles and bones, is with weight training. While the body becomes sculpted and toned, the mind also becomes healthier. Just remember that while you could use weight training to bulk up and gain significant muscle mass, weight training with lighter weights can tone and define without the bulk.

If you start an exercise program now, you can be in shape by summer. Don't jump right in and start exercising like crazy and lifting heavier weights than you need to. This can cause you more harm than good. It's recommended that you start slow and work your way up into a more aggressive workout regimen. It's a good idea to work out at least

three times a week to get the results you want.

In addition to being fun, weight training requires concentration. After all, you are working with weights that if not handled right can do harm. Therefore, when you go to the gym, we suggest you go with a friend. Then, while there, focus on the training. In other words, try to keep the gym time a fun but also serious time for you to dedicate to your body. You would be amazed at how many people go to the gym four to five times a week and then complain that nothing is changing. However, if you were to follow those people around, very little training is done and more time is spent socializing.

A gym membership is not needed. There are several good types of exercise equipment. You don't have to spend anything if you don't want to, not even for weights. Walking is a great exercise and costs nothing; and for weights, you can use cans of soup or whatever is in your cupboard. When you need heavier weights, use gallon jugs. Fill the jugs with water and weigh them on your scale. Weight training is good for both men and women and as long as you keep at it, you will notice that you are

slimming down and shaping up. Weight training will build muscle and muscle is heavier than fat, so don't pass out if you weigh yourself and the scale either hasn't moved or you have gained a couple pounds. The best way to judge your changing body is by the way your clothes fit. By this summer, you can be slimmer and healthier, and that bathing suit you had your eye on will look good on you. How cool is that?

Source: Ralph Trazenby: fitness connection online



Lending Library



If you're a parent, you may often find yourself wondering what is the best way to communicate with your child (or teen), or how to parent a strong-willed child. Or you may be a parent who is trying to balance work and family and is looking for some strategies to guide you. The Lending Library has a wealth of materials ranging from books to videos that will help you in your quest of being a better parent.

Keep in mind that the Lending Library also has children's books that offer a gentle way to discuss issues that children may be facing – such as fitting in with peers, death, and self-esteem.

To borrow materials from the Wellness Works Lending Library, contact Amanda Collins at 1-800-452-8786 extension 283 or via e-mail at acollins@memun.org. To view the entire list of materials that the Lending Library has to offer, check out our website at www.mmeht.org. Click on Wellness Works, then click on Lending Library. There you can search for items by subject or see the entire list of the materials in the Lending Library.



I really don't think I need buns of steel. I'd be happy with buns of cinnamon.

~Ellen DeGeneres

Did you know...

Diet soda can damage your teeth as much as sugared soft drinks, according to University of Maryland research. Blame acids used as flavoring agents.



The History and Benefits of Nordic Walking

As with many new trends, like Yoga and Pilates, Nordic Walking has a long history. Nordic Walking was invented by cross-country skiers who wanted to find a way to stay in shape for their winter sport during the summer months. Together with a Finnish national sport organization, researchers in sports medicine in the USA, and other fitness professionals, the Finnish sports equipment manufacturer Excel Oyj developed Nordic Walking as a fitness exercise in 1997.

In just a few years it has grown into a huge market in Central Europe, Finland, and Scandinavia. In 2001, half a million Finns walked regularly with Nordic Walking poles—10% of the population!

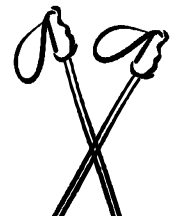
Nordic Walking in its simplest form is walking with poles. In fitness walking you only use your legs to move your body forward. In Nordic Walking you

exercise the upper body too. If you know what cross-country skiing is, then picture yourself using the same technique, simply without the snow and the skis. Some of the benefits of Nordic Walking are listed below:

- Increases caloric expenditure by as much as 46%.
- Caloric burn increases when using poles, an average of 20% compared with ordinary walking.
- Heart rate is 5-17 beats/minute higher.
- Increases upper body strength and endurance.
- Reduces stress on the joints (walking with poles can reduce accumulated force by about 6 tons over the course of a mile, says noted orthopedic surgeon J. Richard Steadman of Vail, Co.).
- Relieves neck and shoulder pain.
- Doesn't aggravate joints.

- Improves neck and chest mobility
- Increases safety of walking, and adds stability.
- Allows the same exercise intensity as running, without the high impact.
- Reduces the rate of perceived exertion for a given exercise intensity.
- Adds a safety factor on slippery and uneven surfaces.
- Enhances mood.
- Can be fun and social for all ages and abilities.

Source: www.excel.com



Leave Extra Baggage at Home



Orthopedic specialists advise leaving your extra baggage at home when traveling, in order to prevent shoulder strain and back pain. These

days, shoulders carry more burdens than in years past. Toting travel bags, luggage, laptop computers, backpacks, sports equipment and musical instruments places stress on the shoulders that can lead to muscle strain and lower back pain.

The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons has found that four out of five adults experience low back pain. Lower back pain is the most frequent cause of lost workdays in adults under 45. Doctors recommend that you not carry more than 15 percent of your body weight on your shoulders

and back. They also suggest that you use properly designed shoulder packs or backpacks for laptops, sports gear or other heavy articles.

The best treatment for shoulder stress and strain is prevention. Increasing muscle strength in your shoulders and daily stretching are essential, but selecting the right shoulder packs and using them properly are equally important. The right pack lightens the load and reduces the stress put on your body.

Source: *American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons*

Pay Attention to Your Heart After a Heart Attack

A recent article in the *Mayo Clinic Women's Health Source* explored the need to focus on the emotional recovery of heart attack survivors in addition to their physical recovery. Depression, fear and anger are common reactions following a cardiac event. Those patients who develop depression are more likely to require hospital care within a year for heart-related problems than heart attack survivors who are not depressed. Heart attack survivors with depression are also three times more likely to die of a future heart attack or other heart problems. While there may be many reasons for this difference in outcomes, a major factor is that patients who exhibit depression are less likely to take their prescribed medications and follow their doctor's advice. When recovering from a heart attack, experts recommend that patients talk about their feelings openly and honestly with their healthcare providers, family members, and friends. Survivors should also consider joining a cardiac rehabilitation program with a counseling or support group to help them navigate through their emotions. A heart attack is a major life event and it is important to be sure that survivors not only care for themselves physically, but emotionally as well.

Caffeinated Compost

Before you throw that coffee filter and used coffee grounds into the trash, consider turning them into something much more useful...compost! When you compost, you are turning organic matter into useful soil-building materials for your gardens, shrubs, and plants. Coffee grounds are slightly acidic and help to lower the soil pH, while also giving the soil a nice rich texture that plants love. A handful of coffee grounds around your acid loving plants, like azaleas, blueberries, and rhododendrons will not only make your plants happier, but it will also help in reducing the amount of materials you put into the landfill. There are a lot of other materials that work well in compost piles, including:

- Dry leaves
- Straw
- Paper
- Pine Needles
- Eggshells
- Fruit trimmings
- Vegetable peels
- Grass clippings
- Seaweed
- And much, much more!



For more information on composting, visit the University of Maine Cooperative Extension website at: www.umext.maine.edu

Making Your Calories Count

Still trying to figure out how to read that nutrition facts label on the back of your favorite foods? If so, you are not alone! The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recognized that the average consumer (you and me) doesn't know what to look for on the nutrition label, so they have created a brand new, interactive website to help us navigate the ins and outs of label reading. *Make Your Calories Count* is designed to provide consumers with information to help plan a healthful diet while managing calorie intake. Using this web-based program will assist you in deciding which foods are right for you based on the nutrition facts label. While the program is primarily designed for use on the internet, you can download the tutorial and/or print a PDF or written transcript for use too. To test your label savvy (and learn a thing or two about calories), visit <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/label.html> and click on the *Make Your Calories Count* icon on the left side of the screen.



How to Avoid Ankle Sprains While Exercising

About 27,000 Americans sprain an ankle every day, making it the most common of all joint injuries. Many are mild and heal with minimal treatment (rest, ice, compress, elevate) in 10 days. If there is more than slight swelling and you can't put any weight on the ankle without undue pain, you should seek medical treatment. You can take steps to help prevent ankle sprains, which is especially important if you've previously sprained an ankle.

Stretch your calf muscles before and after exercise. When calf muscles are tight, they can reduce the range of motion of your foot, increasing the risk of twisting your ankle. Strengthen your lower-leg muscles using exercises such as heel raises and heel walking. Do balance exercises to maintain agility and to retrain the nerves around your ankles that may have been damaged in a previous injury. Exercise regularly - sedentary people are more likely to sprain an ankle than those with strong muscles.

Electrolytes – What Are They and Why Do Some of Us Benefit From Them?

Do you remember hearing; “Drink some Gatorade after the game to refuel because they have electrolytes?” Electrolytes are electrically charged minerals (such as sodium, potassium, magnesium and calcium) that are found in the blood and the fluid inside and outside of your cells. A proper balance of electrolytes, regulated closely by your kidneys, is important because it affects your body's ability to absorb and excrete fluids, coordinate muscles, and regulate heart function, nerve function and concentration.

When you sweat, you lose water and electrolytes. Even when you're active, the food and liquids you consume throughout the day typically replenish these. But if you exercise vigorously, sports drinks with added electrolytes (and usually carbohydrates) can be helpful in restoring your body's energy and electrolyte balance.

Dehydration, due to a loss of fluids through vigorous activity, extreme heat or illness; symptoms such as diarrhea and vomiting; and a loss of electrolytes often go hand in hand. In these cases, treatment with electrolytes, such as drink preparations or intravenous fluids, may be necessary. Other factors that can cause electrolyte imbalance include poor diet, eating disorders, kidney disease and the use of diuretics (medication that is used to help rid the body of sodium and water).

Source: Mayo Clinic Women's HealthSource – December 2006, Volume 10, Number 12

On-Call

On-Call is a medical self-care program for members of the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust. It helps individuals to assess a variety of health concerns by answering three basic questions:

- *Is this a medical emergency?*
- *Should I see or call my doctor?*
- *Can I treat myself at home and if so, how?*

Medical Self-Care Topic of the Quarter- Shin Pain

Shin splints are the result of pounding too long on a surface that is too hard, especially when your legs aren't conditioned properly. Dancers, basketball players, runners, race walkers, or average people who change their routine or get back into exercising after a long break are most susceptible.

When you perform a weight-bearing exercise, your leg muscles swell slightly and press against the bones in your lower leg. Too much exercise causes these muscles to become irritated and inflamed. When that happens, you have shin splints; when you really overdo it, you risk going beyond shin splints to a stress fracture.

Fortunately, shin splints aren't serious and almost never require medical attention. The best course of action is to take it easy and use Homecare measures for 2 to 3 weeks to allow your muscles to heal.

Signs/Symptoms

- Dull ache (at rest) or shooting pain (when bearing weight) on the shin, the long bone that runs along the front of the leg from knee to ankle.

Talk to Your Doctor If:

- Home treatment does not relieve shin splints within 3 weeks.
- You have a small area (about the size of a nickel) of stabbing pain on a bony area of your lower leg.

If none of the above are factors, try these Homecare relievers:

Rest:

- Rest your legs from moderate- or high- impact activity for 2 to 3 weeks after the onset of pain.
- After the pain of shin splints has subsided, resume regular exercise and activity gradually and at a lower intensity. Never exercise "through the pain." Try non-impact activities such as bicycling or swimming until pain is completely gone.

Heat/Cold:

- Apply ice to affected areas for the first 24 to 48 hours to reduce swelling and inflammation.
- Apply warm compresses or low heat to affected areas to reduce discomfort and speed healing.

Medication:

- Aspirin, naproxen, or ibuprofen may help to reduce pain and inflammation.

Cover:

- For comfort and support, use a flexible brace or wrap only during and shortly after periods of activity.

Prevention:

- Wear cushioned footwear with good arch support that fits properly. Replace worn shoes.
- Get into shape gradually.
- Jog or walk on a running track, grass, or dirt trail instead of asphalt or concrete; look for wood floors instead of concrete for basketball or aerobic workouts.
- Warm up before and cool down after each workout.
- Stretch shin and calf muscles daily.

The goal of a Medical Self-Care program is not to deter you from seeking medical attention, but rather to make you more aware of the types of treatment you should seek out. Once you know how to proceed in a particular situation, you will be better able to ask questions, make informed decisions, and have a better relationship with your healthcare provider. Always be sure to check with your doctor if a Homecare remedy goes against your normal course of treatment or if you have been warned against using particular products due to other health conditions.

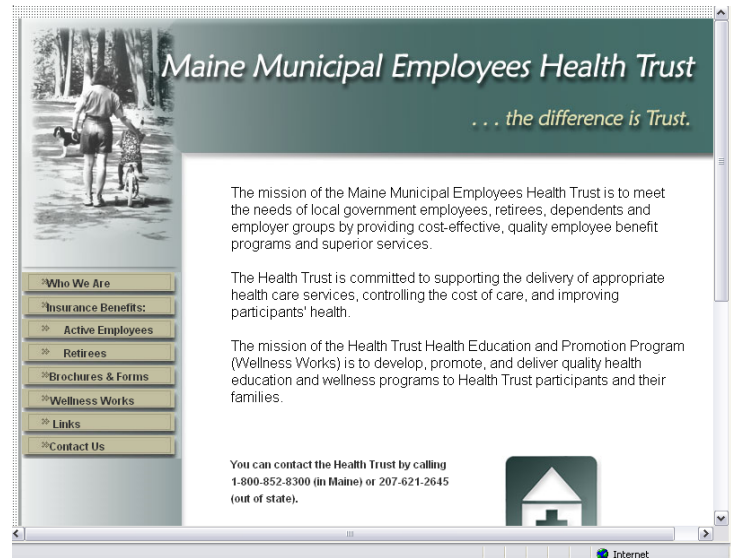


Navigating Your Way Around the Health Trust Website

Are you curious about the benefits and programs offered by the Health Trust? Wish you could navigate your way around the Health Trust Website, but not quite sure where (or how!) to start?

Here are a few simple steps to get you started:

Log on to the Health Trust Website, at www.mmeht.org. This will bring you to the Health Trust's home page. You will see a list of links along the left hand side of the page, as follows:



Many people use the Website to check on their health, dental, disability, and life insurance benefits. You can do this by clicking on the appropriate link (“Active Employees” or “Retirees”) under the heading “Insurance Benefits”. This will bring you to a listing of all the benefits available to active employees and retirees insured through the Health Trust. Remember, though, that different employers offer different benefits, and not all employers offer all of the Health Trust programs. You should check with your employer or the Health Trust to be sure of which benefits you actually have.

The “Brochures & Forms” link provides you with information on HIPAA (the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), as well as allowing you to download and print a HIPAA Authorization Form. This form must be completed and returned to the Health Trust if you wish someone else (for example, a spouse, parent, or child) to be able to access your personal health information.

If you click on the link for “Wellness Works”, you can find out all about the Health Trust’s great health education and promotion (Wellness) programs. These programs include classes that can be offered at the worksite, grant programs to help your employer start and maintain a worksite wellness program, and employee incentive programs that can enable you to earn rewards for participating in healthy behaviors (such as exercising, eating properly, and not smoking). Most of these programs are offered through the worksite, so if you don’t already have an active wellness program at your worksite, be sure to check with your employer to see if you can get one started! You can also find back copies of the quarterly Wellness Works Around the State newsletter on this part of the Website.

If you click on the link labeled “Links”, you will find a page with all sorts of helpful information, including links to Anthem’s online provider directory and information on covered prescription drugs. You can also find information on the Maine Health Management Coalition, of which the Health Trust is a member. The Coalition’s Website provides a wealth of information on Maine doctors and hospitals, all of which can be extremely helpful if you are choosing a medical provider.

Click on the link labeled “Contact Us”, and you will come to a list of Health Trust staff members. This list includes the telephone number and extension for all members of the Health Trust staff. You can even e-mail us, just by clicking on the individual staff member’s name.

If you ever find yourself “lost” in the Website, you can always get back to the home page by either clicking on the link labeled “Home”, or by simply clicking on the picture on the left hand side of your screen (where it says “the difference is Trust”).

You’ve now had a brief tour of the Health Trust Website. If you have any comments or suggestions on how we can improve our Website, please e-mail Anne Wright at awright@memun.org. Please visit us often – we update the site regularly, and always welcome your comments!

Five Memory Boosting Techniques



Do you find that you often have a difficult time remembering the name of a casual acquaintance or what you need to get at the grocery store? Here are five techniques that may help boost your memory.

1. **Visualization.** Create a mental picture of what you want to remember. For instance, to help you recall that you parked in the garage area marked 4B; you could visualize four bees buzzing around your car.
2. **Association.** Combine two or more things you want to remember in a meaningful way. To not forget to pick up soy milk and two pounds of

salmon on your way home, you could imagine opening your car's trunk and finding it filled with the beverage, with a two-pound salmon swimming in it. Researchers say that association involving movement (fish swimming in the milk) tends to be more memorable.

3. **Method of Loci.** Devised by the ancient Greeks, this technique is useful for remembering lists. To do it, you imagine traveling a familiar route, along which the items to be remembered are mentally placed. Say your "memory route" is the bus stops along your evening commute, located at the hospital, the art museum, and the university. Your to do list includes doing laundry, buying stamps, and returning a library book. You could visualize trucks picking up laundry from the hospital, a sign at the museum for an

exhibit of rare stamps, and the university green strewn with books.

4. **Name-free recall.** Connect a prominent feature of a person's face (like a small nose or large ears) with their name. For instance, if Mrs. Beatty has full lips, you could imagine the actor Warren Beatty kissing her lips.
5. **Chunking.** Whenever you try to remember a phone number or an important date by breaking it up into smaller, more manageable "chunks," you are already practicing this technique. But you can also associate each chunk of numbers with something meaningful for easier recall. To remember the ATM code 8374, you could link the chunk 83 with the age at which your grandmother died and 74 with the year your favorite cousin was born.

Source: Self Healing – January 2006

Chainsaw Safety

With the snow quickly melting, it's time for us to start thinking about cleaning up our yards. With the yard work, the chainsaw often comes out to help with winter debris. Chainsaws are very powerful tools; in fact, a saw blade at full throttle moves at fifty miles per hour. With all that power comes a need for extra attention to safety. New models of chainsaws come with many safety features – but keep in mind these safety features do not replace training in correct saw use, proper cutting technique, caution and good old common sense. Below are some quick tips to ensure safety when using a chainsaw:



- Keep the cutting area clear of spectators and pets.
- Remember to look for overhead hazards, including tree limbs and utility lines.
- Keep the chain on the saw clean, sharp and lubricated.
- When using the chainsaw stay on the ground. Do not cut from a ladder. Don't cut above chest height.
- Stand to the side when cutting.
- Cut at full throttle; bring the saw up to speed before starting cuts.
- Keep both hands on the handles. Don't use the bar for leverage, it's there to guide and support the cutting chain.
- Let the saw come to a complete stop before reaching for the chain or blade.
- Buy the correct replacement chain and install according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Be careful of small branches – unweighted limbs may spring back when cut.
- Don't bury the tip of the saw.
- Don't refuel a hot chainsaw.
- Don't drop start the saw.
- Don't push the saw. Let the saw do the work. If you find that you have to push, stop and sharpen the chain.

Zap Those Kitchen Germs

Ever wonder what kind of harmful bacteria and viruses are trapped in your kitchen sponge or dishcloth? You may not want to know! A recent study at the University of Arizona pinpointed kitchen sponges and dishcloths as the site with the highest bacteria count in the home...with over 7 billion bacteria creeping around the average-sized sponge. In relation, there were only 229,000 germs per square inch on faucet handles and the average cutting board had 62,000 bacteria per square inch! Now before you put on your gas mask and gloves to throw out your kitchen sponge, there is good news- you can kill 99% of this bacteria in just two minutes! Simply place your sponge or dishcloth in the microwave for two minutes on high and voila...a germ free sponge for you to wash the dishes and kitchen counters with. It is a good idea to "de-germ" your sponges and dishcloths at least once a week, but more often would be even better!



WELLNESS WORKS

Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust
60 Community Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

PRSRD STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Augusta, ME
PERMIT #195

Visit our website at
www.mmeht.org

The **WELLNESS WORKS Around the State** Newsletter is a publication of the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust (MMEHT), 60 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330. Editor: Anne Charles; Desktop Publishing: Sally Joy; Contributing Writers: Anne Wright, Amanda Collins, Abby DiPasquale and Danielle Yale. Phone: 1-800-452-8786 (in Maine), 207-623-8428 (out of state).

Newsletter Search Contest

Do you want a chance to win a copy of the American Heart Association's Quick and Easy Cookbook? Take a few minutes and answer the following questions (all answers can be found in articles in this newsletter). Send the answers along with your name, address and phone number to: *Wellness Works*, 60 Community Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330. You can also e-mail your answers to us at: **wellness@memun.org**. Entries must be received by April 15, 2007. One winner will be drawn at random.

Congratulations to Raymond Moody from Maine Maritime Academy, who won the Winter Newsletter Trivia Contest!

Your Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Employer (or former employer, if you are a retiree): _____

1. What website should you refer to to learn more about composting? _____

2. List three ways to prevent shin splints: _____

3. How long should you microwave your sponge to kill germs? _____

4. List the 5 techniques that may help boost your memory: _____

5. List three benefits of Nordic Walking: _____

Good luck – and happy reading!

