

# GROWING A HEALTHIER YOU

I must say I feel a little twinge of hypocrisy as I close myself in this dark study on the first sunny Sunday afternoon I can remember in a long time. The new baby dandelions are calling to me from the front flower beds, so easy to pull from the damp earth, and here I sit with both hands on the keyboard! Well, hopefully you will continue to read about the health benefits of gardening and make my sacrifice worth the while.



Gardening's first and obvious benefit is physical fitness. It requires strength, endurance, flexibility, and can be done at any pace as you begin to build these qualities. And of course exchanging your leaf blower for a rake and reacquainting yourself with the push mower couldn't hurt you or the environment either! I recommend breaking down your gardening tasks into several shorter sessions rather

than the marathon weekend events that cause pain and injury. Try three sessions a week where you work at a steady pace, alternating your activities to promote balance in the muscle groups that you are using. For example, pull weeds with alternating hands while down on one knee rather than bending or squatting. Use knee pads, a kneeling pad, or a wheeled garden bench. Stay centered and move your whole body rather than reaching for that one last little weed over in the corner. Every ten minutes or so get up and stretch tired muscle groups. After thirty minutes of ground work, spend some time pruning or dead heading or better yet, harvesting!

That leads us to gardening's second health benefit. Gardeners are more likely than their non-gardening counterparts to consume the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and to enjoy a wider variety of these items in the diet. The quality of these antioxidant rich foods is much higher when they go from back yard to table as well. While you are nibbling the sugar snap peas or maybe a freshly fallen apple off of your well-pruned tree, your skin is making vitamin D that seems to help ward off certain cancers and helps maintain strong bones and your pineal gland (located behind your optic nerve) is soaking up the sun to make melatonin, improving your mood and ability to regulate your sleeping and waking cycles.

So, could one also say that gardeners are happier people?



Well there are many ways to relax, but nature does seem to have a uniquely soothing effect on mind and body. Gardening has the added benefit of allowing you to become a nurturer and creates a sense of purpose which can be helpful if you have been struggling with an illness that makes you dependent on others.

If you don't think you even have space for a pot of parsley or want a more social environment to pursue gardening, consider getting involved with GRUB, Garden Raised Bounty. They are an Olympia based organization that has a volunteer run farm on the Westside that donates fresh produce to the food bank and teaches young people how to garden. They also have a Kitchen Garden Project that has been providing free raised beds to low income families in Olympia since 1993. You can contact them at 753-5522 or learn more at [www.goodgrub.org](http://www.goodgrub.org) and get growing!

# VACCINE UPDATE

There has been a bumper crop of new vaccines and new recommendations for vaccination schedules, so I thought the newsletter would be a good place to try and summarize the latest and greatest.

- **Gardasil:** I sent a letter to the parents of young ladies eligible for this vaccine. It is a series of three shots that reduces the chance of contracting the most dangerous forms of the HPV (genital warts) virus, i.e. the type most likely to cause cervical cancer. If you get the vaccine you still need to understand safer sexual practices and still need to get regular pap smears. You should consider the vaccine if you are older than 10 and have not yet become sexually active. It is so far only recommended for women. The health department in Washington State is providing, but not requiring, this vaccine.
- **Zostavax:** This vaccine reduces the chance of getting shingles or herpes zoster and the less common but disabling post herpetic neuralgia. It is recommended for those over age 60 as you are at higher risk. It is not recom-

mended for those who have already had shingles as the chances of getting it again are very low. Because the vaccine contains live virus, you must have a good immune system to receive it. Because the vaccine costs between \$200-250, I recommend calling your pharmacy benefit provider to see if it is covered first. I can prescribe it and administer here in the office but it is obtained from your pharmacist.

- **Menactra:** This is a newer and longer lasting vaccine against meningococcal meningitis. The health department is now providing this and it can be given to teens, especially those leaving for college and close living quarters. Newer recommendations are that we give it at a 12 year old well child check.
- **Boostrix:** This replaces the 11-12 year old tetanus booster and adds additional protection against both tetanus and pertussis. During pertussis (whooping cough) outbreaks, those most at risk are newborns that have not yet had the chance to be immunized.

By giving appropriate booster shots to older children, we protect the youngest and most vulnerable.

- **Varivax:** This great vaccine has been around since 1995, but we are finding out that many children may benefit from a booster shot as older children. If your child had their first dose as a toddler, they should have a booster shot between ages 4-6.

**RotaTeq:** The fight to find a safe vaccine against rotavirus, a cause of serious childhood diarrheal illness, continues as this second attempt, an oral vaccine, also seems to increase the risk of intussusception, a rare form of bowel obstruction in children. I do not currently recommend this vaccine.

The way things have been going lately, I wouldn't be surprised if there was a new vaccine to talk about between now and when this newsletter reaches your mailboxes, but for now you should be experts!



# NEW HOURS

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As some of you may already know, effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, we have new office hours.

**Monday – Thursday 8:30am to 5:00 pm**  
**Friday 8:30am to Noon**



If you have an urgent need after hours, remember your Vantage Physician is always just a phone call away. (360-438-1161)

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## COME VISIT OUR BOOTH!!!!

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### BUSINESS SHOWCASE

“WHERE BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY COME TOGETHER”

WEDNESDAY APRIL 11TH, 2007

10:00 A.M. TO 6:00 P.M.

SAINT MARTIN'S PAVILION

5300 PACIFIC AVE. SE

LACEY, WA 98503

Come visit Vantage Physicians at the annual 2007 Business Showcase presented by the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce and the Business Examiner. Over 100 vendors will be present for the event as the Business Showcase celebrates its 20th year!

### Win a trip to Cancun Mexico!

Your visit to Business Showcase 2007 could be your ticket to beautiful Cancun, Mexico! Attendees of the Business Showcase 2007 will receive a passport at the door. Visit at least 30 vendors to sign or stamp your passport card to qualify for the grand prize drawing. The winner will receive a four-night trip for two to Cancun, Mexico, including air and airport transfers to and from the hotel. Must be 18 years or older to enter, some restrictions apply. In addition to the Cancun trip, door prizes will be awarded throughout the day.

Admission to the show is \$5.00, but Vantage Physicians has coupons for free admission available at the reception counter in our office.

If you would like future publications of this newsletter emailed to you, please call us at 360-438-1161 or email your physician:

Dr. Kershisnik:  
ekk@vantagephysicians.net

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## PEEPS TRIVIA

- The number of peeps eaten at Easter could more than circle the globe if laid end to end
- If you put 8000 peeps bunnies in a vertical line they would reach to the top of the Sears tower in Chicago.
- In 1950 it took about 27 hours to make one peeps chick. It now takes about 6 minutes.
- Each peep contains 32 calories and 0 grams of fat.

