

HOW TO AVOID MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE

When you travel to any third world country, and some peripheral areas of first world countries, you have to pay attention to what you eat and drink, to prevent traveler's diarrhea. The first line of defense is to drink bottled water and stay away from anything that comes from the ground and is uncooked. Frankly, part of the reason to go to remote places is to see and eat things you can't enjoy at home. So risking diarrhea is part of the adventure. The second line of defense is to take advantage of probiotic bacteria. You eat this in natural yogurt or in tablets from the health food stores. You should start taking this some weeks before your trip and while you are on your trip if you can. The good probiotic bacteria make it harder for the bad "adventure" bacteria to "bloom" in your gut. The third line of defense is to take bismuth salicylate (not if you are allergic to aspirin), this is the pink stuff (two Pepto-Bismol tablets, four times daily, not to exceed three weeks). So what are your odds? Only drinking bottle water and watching what you eat means you have a 20- 50% chance of getting the revenge (in Mexico, that is). With the probiotics, some unknown amount less, with the pink stuff, even less, maybe 10- 25%. The fourth line is a new antibiotic effective against E-Coli bacteria (but less against other wild bacteria) and it is a special antibiotic not absorbed from your gut into your blood stream. It's called Rifaximin. All of these can be combined. Lastly, if you have special digestive concerns, you may want to do a general purpose new generation antibiotic while traveling. Often used, doxycycline is good but this along with sulfa combinations are less effective due to bacterial resistance. Please discuss this issue with your personal physician before deciding upon your individual course of action. Please don't go to Mexico and buy some antibiotics that you don't know anything about and start taking them as there are too many complications. So take those exotic vacations and eat those exotic foods and drinks, but with discretion and moderation. Hasta luego!

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WELCOME TO THE SPRING 2010 NEWSLETTER

Wow! Winter started early last year, didn't it. Didn't really seem much like Global Warming did it? Well, we know that means that this Spring will be all that much more fun. Think about it this way... once we don't have to worry about Xmas gifts, or ice, or frozen pipes, and we've paid our silly taxes, and the birds have returned... Well, we will have a few wonderful weeks before we have to mow the lawn and clean the house. Yes, it is a blessed time of the year. So smile, and onto the news...

DON'T YOU DARE EAT BEFORE SURGERY!!!!!!

The standard instructions before surgery are, "No food or drink after the midnight before surgery requiring significant anesthesia!" This instruction is designed to prevent residual stomach food from sneaking up your esophagus and getting into your lungs during the prolonged anesthetic sleep. This is called "pulmonary aspiration" and can lead to serious infections like pneumonia. And "no eat, no drink" instructions make for a very hungry, thirsty patient (not to mention grouchy). Are they really necessary? Well, for some patients, yes. If you have GERD (you know who you are), or have "gastric paralysis" (found in some diabetic patients and patients with some neurological disorders, you probably shouldn't eat or drink after midnight before surgery. However, in the Johns Hopkins Medical Letter, Health After 50, for healthy people, according to the American Society of Anesthesiologist, for elective surgery...

- Clear liquids, including water, clear tea, black coffee, carbonated beverages, and fruit juice without pulp, up to 2 hours before surgery.
- Very light meals, like toast and tea with milk, up to 6 hours before surgery.
- Heavy meals, including fried or fatty foods and meat, up to 8 hours before surgery.

Lastly, just ask, because it's best to follow your Doctor's advice. Thanks.

WHAT'S NEW AT OUR OFFICE?

We have put in completely new dispensing cabinets and have overhauled our frame inventory. The new highed cabinets should show off all the new colors and styles. Great looking glasses are a statement of good taste and sophistication. The Opticians have reviewed and replaced almost all of the inventory to allow a greater selection in styles and sizes. Come by and take a look even if it's not time to replace or renew your current glasses. Thanks.

WHY DO WE DILATE YOUR EYES?

We dilate your eyes because it is the best way to see all the parts inside your eyes. None of the new technologies, OptoMap or retinal cameras, is as good as dilating your eyes. Your can't have these other tests and then think you don't need to be dilated. We have a \$30,000 digital retinal camera in our office and we love it's great technology, but we still know that the dilated retinal exam is the best technology for looking into your eyes. And guess what! It's free in our office. So we may ask you to have your retina photographed in our office but we still want to dilate your eyes. Please don't go some where else and spend extra money and think you don't have to have your eyes dilated. Besides, dilation isn't old fashioned, it's the gold standard of eye health checks. Thanks!

WHO SHOULD HAVE THEIR VITAMIN D LEVELS CHECKED?

We all know that the Dermatologists have warned us away from sunshine so we don't get skin cancer. And this is a good thing. After all, the cave people didn't worry about skin cancer because skin cancer doesn't matter when you are worried about lions and wolves chasing and eating grandpa. But we are living longer and starting to have increasing problems with osteoporosis. Vitamin D helps us build strong bones, so some sunshine is good but if you don't really get as much sunshine as you should and you are over 65, testing for Vitamin D is important. Medicare knows this and will pay for it. So especially if you have a family history of osteoporosis and are over 65, you should talk with your Family Physician about being tested for Vitamin D. If your levels are low, it's easy to take a supplement, so do it!

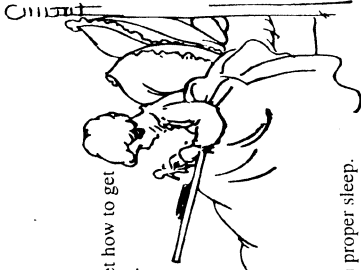
MRSA...HOW MANY OF US KNOW ABOUT MRSA?

MRSA is the acronym for Methacillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, an especially tough strain of bacteria that is a big problem in health care today. Estimates from the Centers for Disease Control suggest that MRSA killed more Americans in 2005 than the AIDS virus. This makes this an important health care concern. Apparently, MRSA gets on your skin and in your nose and stays like a bacterial hitchhiker. And it can stay for a very long time and you don't really know that you have it, until you have an injury or surgery where it can get into your body. MRSA is dangerous because it produces more toxic chemicals than other bacteria and it isn't affected by a lot of the antibiotics that we routinely use. So MRSA lives in hospitals and nursing homes and in our noses and on our skin. What are your risk factors for serious infections with this "bad bug"? Here are some, 1) Hospitalization in the last year, 2) nursing homes, 3) frequent antibiotic use, 4) exposure to intravenous drug users. So careful personal hygiene and judicious antibiotic use can go a long way to protect you from this infection. Just do it!

FOR BETTER SLEEP

With all the talk about how healthy a good night's sleep is, sometimes we forget how to get a good night's sleep. There are rules after all. Here are eight to think about. . .

- 1) Keep regular hours. Your body will know when it's ready to sleep.
- 2) Exercise regularly. But not just before going to bed as it disturbs sleep physiology.
- 3) Try to get outside for somewhere between one half hour to one hour each day to set your natural circadian rhythms.
- 4) Don't hog down a bunch of food at the evening meal.
- 5) Avoid alcohol near bedtime and avoid caffeine after dinner.
- 6) Don't you be napping in the middle of the day. Get up and walk around.
- 7) Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. Your body temperature lowers in proper sleep.
- 8) Keep the bedroom only for sleep (and romance), so you are psychologically ready for sleep when in bed. Actually, there are more rules that help but you get the flavor of this, "How-To". So get a good night's rest so you won't be so irritable when the blender explodes in the morning. Thanks!



DO YOU HAVE TO CHECK YOUR BLOOD SUGAR YOURSELF?

A lot of our patients are diabetics, and some check their blood sugar often, some sometimes, and some only have their blood glucose checked via the HAlc test at the Diabetic Doctor's office. Many of you have heard us recommend that our patients check their own blood sugar regularly at home. In fact, when you come in for a diabetic retinal review one of our first questions is, "did you take your blood sugar this morning?" Firstly, we want to know if your blood sugar level is close enough to normal to allow an accurate refraction and visual acuity check. If it is high, it is probably more important to be seen by your Diabetic Doctor than to have an eye exam. Secondly, when you check your blood sugar at home, you begin to understand how your body reacts to the foods you eat. Counseling by a Nutritionist will help you choose your foods wisely, but you can be more accurate if you can see the blood sugar levels associated with too much of the wrong foods (potatoes for example). We don't think you have to check your blood sugar every hour, or every day, even, but a regular monitoring of your blood sugar helps you know what the foods you eat do, how exercise helps, and we think this makes for better long term control. So you don't have to spend a fortune on strips, but a little knowledge here is helpful.

WE ARE NOW ON EYEMED AND COMP BENEFITS

Many of our patients work for Hertz. We were surprised when the company HR people switched their eyecare plan from VSP to EyeMed. EyeMed is owned by an eyeglass frame manufacturer that owns Lenscrafters. Lenscrafters is devoted to selling Luxottica frames and Lenscrafters in-house brands of lenses so you don't get a choice as to Varilux or Zeiss lenses, and you have to choose from their company frame selection. This is part of the reason that we have delayed participating in EyeMed. Recently, EyeMed has changed their policies and we can use other frames and lenses so we are enrolling as an EyeMed provider. We hope this participation will help with your eyecare needs, and hope this works out well for both of us. Thanks for waiting for us to be on this plan!