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## HOW TO MEASURE YOUR OXYGEN UPTAKE AND HOW IT CAN IMPROVE YOUR FITNESS

Unless you're a seasoned endurance athlete, you probably don't know exactly what a VO2 max score is — but understanding it can benefit athletes at all levels. In short, your VO2 max score (also known as maximal oxygen uptake) is the maximum amount of oxygen that your body can process while intensely exercising.

### WHY IS MY VO2 MAX SCORE IMPORTANT?

Think of your VO2 Max score as horsepower — but for the human body. A high VO2 max score means there's a big engine under the hood. Having more "horsepower" comes with a number of benefits, such as a reduced risk of diseases (like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer) as well as an improved mood and better sleep. In a way, measuring your VO2

is a good way to gauge how much you're improving your quality of life.

### HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY VO2 MAX SCORE?

The best way to improve your VO2 max score is through a combination of interval and continuous training. For example, on different days you can alternate between high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts and less intense, but longer, workouts. However, that type of varied training schedule might be too much for some right off the bat, so the best way to start improving your VO2 max score may be to focus on HIIT workouts — even if they don't take very long.

### HOW CAN I MEASURE MY VO2 MAX SCORE?

Your VO2 max score is measured in milliliters of oxygen per kilogram of



body weight per minute. The only way to get the exact score is to test yourself in a VO2 laboratory — something that most professional endurance athletes take advantage of. However, because knowing this score can benefit anyone, there are a few ways to get good estimates without the lab equipment. High-end fitness trackers, such as Garmin watches, can actually give you an estimate of your VO2 max score. Some online calculators, which rely on the data from previous tests for their algorithms, can produce a rough estimate of this score as well.

Knowing your score might not be necessary to your fitness training — but it does provide a way of track improvement that many athletes find useful.

## PINEAPPLE SWEET POTATOES, HERE I COME!

MY FAVORITE THANKSGIVING TRADITION AND A DENTAL TIP THAT COULD SAVE YOUR HOLIDAY

Thanksgiving is only a few weeks away, and I'm already craving my husband's cooking. He's an expert in the kitchen, and every year he makes my favorite dish of the holiday: sweet potatoes with pineapple.

It might sound crazy, but don't knock it until you try it — the combination is delicious! I also just love pineapple, so that might make me a little biased. This year, in order to stay safe, we're planning a tiny Thanksgiving with our kids instead of a big meal with the whole family. It's going to be different (just like I'm sure yours will be), but we plan to make the best of it, partly by eating our weight in good food.

That said, even with all of the turkey decorations everywhere, I can still hardly believe it's November and just a few weeks away from the end of 2020. Honestly, this year has felt like a marathon, and not in a good way. In fact, just a few days before sitting down to write this newsletter, I came across an article in USA Today with a scary headline: "Dentists Could Raise Fees, Exit Family Practices as Pandemic Keeps Patients Away."

The idea that this pandemic could put my fellow dentists out of business makes me sad, especially because family practices often provide the best care for patients. This is a very real situation and the increased cost of doing business — from PPEs and infection control supplies costing 3-8x normal costs, plus the added equipment needed for safety, plus the impact

on treatment time and ability to see fewer patients in a day all result in dental offices not being able to reopen.

Changes to the business side of Great Smiles is inevitable because of this, and we will inform you if our participation with your insurance may be affected. We hope that even if we change participation status with your insurance, you will see the value in staying as a patient in our practice because we focus on your care and safety and do not let insurance policies dictate the quality of care or the dental treatment procedures that are available to you. We will always focus on YOUR health needs and not what is "allowed" by the insurance company. But as I read the rest of the article, I also started to feel really thankful. Yes, this year has been tough, but Great Smiles is still going strong! We're not in danger of closing our doors right now. We're actually busy, and that's all thanks to patients like you. I'm definitely putting your name on my thankful list.

It means a lot to me that you trust my team to provide safe, effective dental care right now. (Speaking of which, you can get a refresher on our safety precautions and changes at the office inside this newsletter.) It also means a lot that my team is still willing and able to come into work. I'm definitely thankful for them! Dentistry is a high-risk job, and a lot of dental providers and staff members have been hesitant to get back to helping people. Some have even left dentistry altogether. My team, however, has total faith in our safety measures and they've jumped in with both feet to help our patients.



I've really relied on my staff these last few months because we're seeing a lot more dental emergencies than usual right now. Many people put off their regular dental checkups early on in the pandemic, and now things that we would have caught early are going south fast. Teeth with cavities that could've been taken care of with fillings if they'd been caught earlier now need root canals. We've even had to extract a few teeth in serious cases.

I'm not sharing this to freak you out but rather to remind you that if you haven't booked a checkup with us, now's the time! It could save you a lot of hassle and expense this holiday season. Plus, as I've said before, there's a really strong link between your dental health and the health of your whole body and immune system. Stress and unhealthy lifestyle changes can lead to bacterial issues like cavities and vice versa.

To stay safe and healthy this winter, make sure you get plenty of sleep, take your vitamins, eat some veggies along with your pumpkin pie, and most of all, visit me for a dental checkup before it's too late!

To your great smiles and better health,

*-Dr. Michelle Weddle*

# COVID-19 AND CHRONIC PAIN

## HOW YOUR PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, around 116 million Americans suffer from chronic pain each year. Unfortunately, with the coronavirus pandemic still going strong in the United States, chronic pain sufferers might be at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Dr. Samer Narouze of Western Reserve Hospital says that's because "there is a complex relationship between chronic pain and the immune system." Narouze adds that chronic pain patients "can be considered immunocompromised, mainly because so many are elderly and have multiple comorbidities." On top of that, people who contract COVID-19 may be at risk of developing chronic pain after the rest of the symptoms abate.

Older adults are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 — especially if they have preexisting conditions. Additionally, some older adults develop chronic pain after contracting COVID-19, due to the disease itself and its treatment. For example, patients who have been treated in an intensive care unit and have spent prolonged periods being immobile and reliant on ventilators might experience chronic pain as a result. This is especially true for those who don't do rehabilitation following their hospital stay. Additionally, patients who are socially isolated during their hospital stay, and following their discharge, can experience a psychological burden, which makes them more susceptible to chronic pain.



If you contracted COVID-19 and are now recovering from the symptoms, look out for signs of chronic pain, like body stiffness during activities, decreased circulation, or weight gain. You may also notice that other conditions are worsening or you're relying more on pain medications. If you think you might be experiencing chronic pain in the wake of the COVID-19, talk to a health care professional about your symptoms and ask if physical therapy can help.

Physical therapists help their patients alleviate chronic pain through strength training and flexibility exercises, as well as through developing greater awareness of body mechanics. Don't wait to talk to a physical therapist about your chronic pain — contact us today!

## WHY IS SPINACH SO GOOD FOR YOU?

If the reason you know spinach is good for you is because either your mother told you, or you saw Popeye the Sailor down a can before a fight and gain superhuman strength, you might not understand exactly why it's so good for you. Rest assured, your mom wasn't lying (although Popeye might have been stretching the truth). Spinach is actually one of the most nutritious and versatile foods you can add to your diet. Here's why.



### INCREDIBLE NUTRIENT-PER-CALORIE COUNT

Three cups of spinach contain about 20 calories. However, those 3 cups also contain almost no fat, 2 grams of protein, 3 grams of carbs, and 2 grams of fiber. On top of that, you get more than 300% of your daily dose of vitamin K, which supports bone growth; 160% of your daily dose of vitamin A; and around 25%-40% of your daily dose of vitamin C, both of which help the immune system function properly.

### POTENT PROTECTION AGAINST DISEASE

The abundant antioxidants in spinach mitigate a staggering number of health problems. For starters, spinach has kaempferol, an antioxidant that can protect the body against cancer. Additionally, the antioxidant quercetin, also found in spinach, has been shown to have positive effects on brain health, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes. Other components of spinach can also improve blood pressure and protect eye health.

### VERSATILE IN MEAL PREPARATION

Aside from the more scientific reasons that make spinach a superfood, you can prepare and consume spinach in so many creative ways. You can eat it raw as a part of a salad, throw a few leaves in a smoothie, cook it in stir fry, or bake it into some brownies. If you have a bag of spinach in your fridge, there's no shortage of ways you can get some of those amazing health benefits. Just don't expect to suddenly vanquish all your foes like Popeye did.

## WHAT IS FAMILY BURNOUT

### AND HOW DO I PREVENT IT FROM AFFECTING MY FAMILY?

According to one study from 2018, over half of all parents surveyed were experiencing some form of burnout (i.e., exhaustion, cynicism, lack of professional satisfaction, etc.) — and that was before the pandemic.

Now, as the world enters the eighth month of the coronavirus pandemic, many parents are working from home or dealing with unemployment, and many children are doing school online. Families are spending a lot of time together at home, balancing new routines — and that's led to *family burnout*.

When you experience "family burnout," the kind of exhaustion that comes from spending too much time with family, it manifests itself as physical and emotional exhaustion, an inability to handle usual tasks, and increased irritability. The more demanding your work and home responsibilities are, the more susceptible you are to family burnout. Single parents are especially susceptible, but burnout can drastically affect romantic relationships and even children. Most people are not used to spending so much time together at home.

With all that in mind, don't worry — family burnout is preventable. It starts with creating a balance between work and rest. While it might feel like you don't have a moment

to spare between work and taking care of the kiddos in the house, identifying those spare moments in your day is absolutely necessary for your health.



Establish a routine that defines time for work, sleep, studying, and other tasks. You'll then move from task to task easier, leaving less room for conflict between others in the household. You'll also see more clearly when you can rest! Those breaks don't have to be anything special — a 15-minute walk by yourself outside or a 30-minute stretch with a good book in a comfy chair. Find time to let your kids have a break, too, like playing

their favorite games, reading their favorite books, or playing outside. You'll all feel more refreshed to tackle the remaining tasks of the day.

Even though you can prevent or minimize burnout through a more balanced routine, sometimes that's not enough. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Family therapy can be immensely helpful for maintaining your mental health when your own attempts need a boost. These are unique times, so be patient with yourself and your family as you cope with new challenges and routines. Burnout doesn't have to be inevitable.

## TAKE A BREAK!



## LUXURIOUS VEGAN CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Inspired by WellPlated.com

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz vegan dark chocolate, chopped
- 2 large avocados, pitted and skinned
- 3 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup almond milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1-3 tsp maple syrup, to taste
- Fresh berries, for garnish

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, melt the dark chocolate. Heat in 15-second intervals, then stir and repeat until melted. Set aside to cool.
2. In a food processor or blender, combine the cooled chocolate and other ingredients. Blend until smooth and creamy, adding additional sweetener as desired.
3. Scoop into glasses and refrigerate at least 2 hours. Top with berries and serve!