

Get healthier from head to toe

By Paula Wrenn

Take a bigger bite out of life

If life can be likened to a big juicy apple, you'll enjoy it more fully with a healthy mouth and strong teeth. Novato dentist Dr. David Epstein believes fear is why some people avoid the dentist. Neglecting oral health starts a chain of unhealthy events. "The mouth is the gateway to your body," he says. "Studies link gum disease and bacteria in the mouth to heart attacks, coronary heart disease and strokes."

For fearful patients, Dr. Epstein offers painless sedation dentistry. He describes other recent advancements in dentistry. Diode laser technology helps kill bacteria, treat gum disease, and prevent tooth loss. Bleaching, permanent tooth implants, veneers and porcelain facing procedures have been perfected to give patients confidence about the appearance of their smiles. There is a laser therapy to cosmetically reshape gums, and some adults are straightening their teeth in little more than a year with virtually invisible braces.

For do-it-yourself dental care: Stop smoking to improve oral hygiene and reduce risk of oral cancers. See a dentist for an appliance to wear that stops pain and damage from grinding and clenching. Flossing really works and an electric toothbrush with sonic technology reduces tartar build-up and bone loss. Tongue scrapers work better than tongue brushing to remove bacteria.

Starting from within

Elephant Pharmacy is big on service, big on employee knowledge of product, and big on customer care. They carry 25,000 products, employ and affiliate with a

variety of health and nutrition experts, and offer as many as 100 free workshops on subjects ranging from baby massage to tea tasting to "kicking" sugar. The newest Elephant Pharmacy on 3rd Street in San Rafael has five core departments: traditional prescriptions; vitamins and herbals; body and face care; grocery (featuring organics and natural products); and lifestyle. One could say it's a place for the person who takes their medicine with a dose of yoga.

The idea is to help customers in their quest to find health, happiness and to live a good, long life, according to CEO/president, Kathi Lentzsch: "People hang out here; we consistently get positive comments about our customer connection. We want to be to drugstores what Whole Foods is to grocery stores."

Elephant Pharmacy's innovative blend of traditional and holistic health remedies draws customers from a wide range of health experiences and preferences. "While here to get their blood pressure prescription filled, a customer can also look into natural and traditional options for cholesterol with their doctor's guidance," Lentzsch says.

Herbalists, acupuncturists and other health and wellness practitioners are available to consult with customers. Customers can experience mini-facials and makeovers before investing in cosmetics. The latest service addition at Elephant Pharmacy is a 100% green, non-toxic Blue Sky Cleaners drop off service. Good for you and the environment, read about it online at www.elephantpharm.com.

Then again, sometimes it's

all about stopping that growl in your stomach with really, really wonderful food. We are what we eat and nobody needs more chemicals. Anyone who has enjoyed the delights of a meal at Lotus Cuisine of India in San Rafael is sure to be pleased with the flavors of the organic and natural food menu Surinder "Paul" Sroa has lined up at this new restaurant, Café Lotus, in Fairfax. The menu at Lotus Café has Indian influence, but the primary emphasis is on delicious, healthy foods. Open for lunch and dinner, the menu features items such as free-range roasting chickens from Petaluma Valley and Santa Rosa and natural lamb.

Sroa says patrons should expect the same quality as they have come to know at his other eatery, but that the clean, full flavors of organically grown potatoes and vegetables sets Café Lotus apart. "We even have a list of wines from organically grown California grapes, such as wines from Laird Family Estate, specially selected to complement our foods," Sroa says.

Relaxing over a meal of healthful, well-prepared food is a good way to treat yourself well.

Add some activity

If you wasted too much time waiting in line for rental equipment on your last ski vacation at Tahoe, Old Town Sports in Novato can get you on the slopes faster. Check out the ski demo sale this spring, or get measured and on file so all you have to do is place your rental order a week in advance next year. Then pick up equipment to take with you.

While visiting Old Town Sports on ski business, the new bicycles will remind you

"Neglecting oral health starts a chain on unhealthy events. The mouth is the gateway to your body"

-Dr. David Epstein, Dentist, Novato



"The center won't treat individuals with suspected skin cancers until they've seen their dermatologist. However, a benefit of Fraxel laser treatments is that they can address some pre-cancerous skin conditions."

-Kevin Jones, Director, Laser Center of Marin

it's time for warm weather family fun. Owner Roger Goodwin says spring is a good time to take advantage of bicycle tune-up specials, and for new riders to take up a fun sport for exercise. His customers include cyclists from experienced, rugged mountain bikers to cruisers who just want pleasant transportation between two points.

Goodwin specializes in understanding his customers' needs and cycling plans so he can fit them to the right equipment. Young families want options to get outdoors that will help their youngest members stay up to speed. For smaller children, there are trailers, baby seats and tandem options that keep them safe at hand. He cautions parents about taking youngsters on trail rides due to the jarring and potential for falls.

Rod Heckelman, general manager at Mt. Tam Racquet Club in Larkspur, developed it as a racquet and fitness club. "It's hard for most adults to participate in a team sport. When the fitness craze started twenty years ago, most of us chose individual sports such as running, swimming, and solo cycling," he says. "Golf took off because it was individual, but could also be social."

Tennis has long been one of the most aerobic team sports. Pros cover about 20 miles during a match in what Heckelman describes as a true give-and-take that motivates the players. Tennis is experiencing a resurgence as more adults seek social ways to enjoy physical activity. He thinks this is healthy in that players are dependent on their opposition, and respect for the opponent optimizes a tennis player's performance. He also likes that it is a sport

one can play even at an advanced age.

Heckelman says the best news for tennis beginners is they no longer need a level of skill or conditioning to get started in the sport. An exciting innovation, Cardio-Tennis™, helps them gain some of each. Beginners get moving and novice players desiring an aerobic workout feel their time is well spent. A combination of up to a dozen players at all levels can share the court at the same time, so it also helps individuals connect with future partners.

Spotting trouble

Skin that spends lots of time outdoors is likely to age faster and have additional problems.

Laser Center of Marin (www.marinlaser.com) employs a variety of laser and light based technologies to keep clients as young-looking on the outside as they feel on the inside.

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