



# what the health

THE LATEST BUZZ ON FITNESS, NUTRITION, AND WELLNESS FALL 2011

## WORK OUT YOUR ABS, STANDING UP

PG. 34

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*Plus:*

4 Fresh Exercise Trends

The Science Of Love

Dealing With Death

& More



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# get well



story by: daisy becerra // photography by: lauren levy

# PROTECTION PAID-FOR

With a new health insurance measure taking effect next year, college-aged women will find easier ways to obtain contraceptives *without breaking the bank.*

**IMAGINE KNOWING YOU SHOULD BE TAKING BIRTH CONTROL,** but having no way to pay for it. With the help of a recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services decision, for many, this will no longer be the case.

In early August, the government mandated that all insurers cover a range of women's reproductive-related and prenatal health care expenses including birth control and contraceptive methods without additional out-of-pocket costs or co-pays starting in 2013. Many organizations, including the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, welcomed the announcement as a victory for women's health praising the government's move to eliminate co-paying for contraceptives in a press release. Planned Parenthood said that the order would without a doubt reduce the rate of unintended pregnancy in the United States.

Imani Jackson, a junior biotechnology major, agrees. "Most teen pregnancies are caused by people not having available resources and knowledge," said Jackson, who is also a member of Sex S.Y.M.B.A.L.S., an on-campus organization that promotes awareness of contraceptives for African American and Latino students.

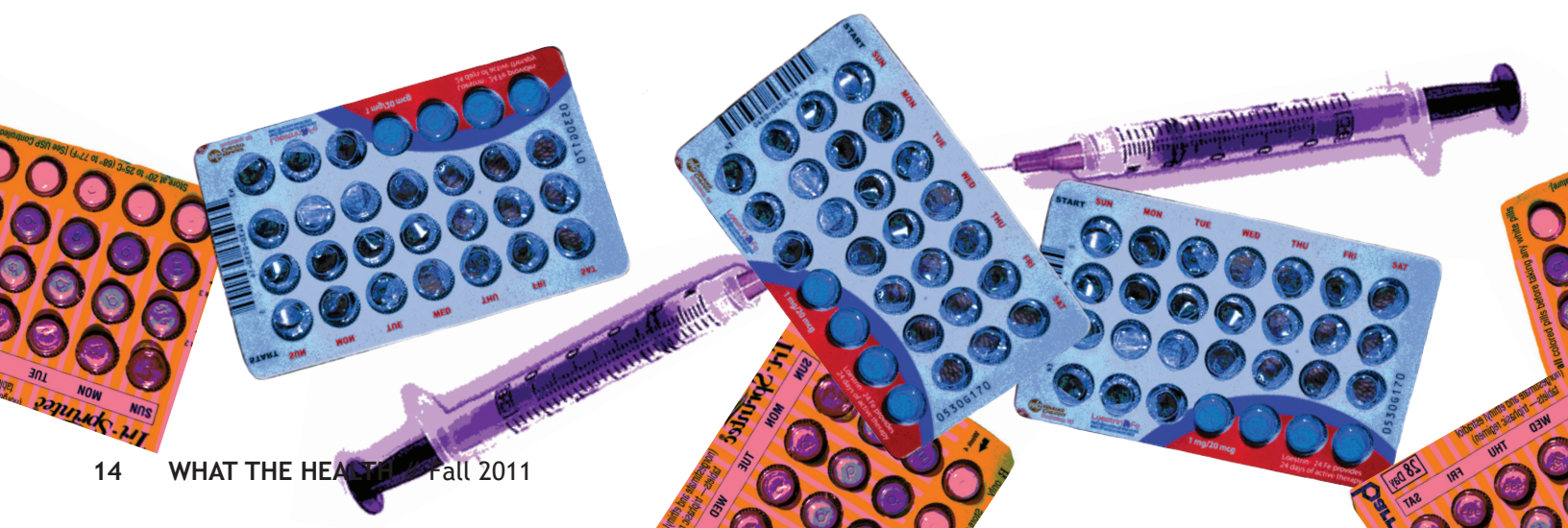
For many women across the country, the measure will make it easier to obtain the right kind of contraceptives without a financial burden. Christine Carter, a senior biology major, says "the birth control that my doctor recommended was very expensive," says Carter. "Fortunately, my insurance was able to cover the samples that I needed."

Betty DeFazio, director of community affairs and public policy at Planned Parenthood in the Rochester/Syracuse region, says that many women struggle with the cost of birth control, even with co-payments.

"In this economic climate, with women spending money on so many other necessities, to have this off of their plate is something that's really going to help," she says.

Jackson says the measure will make things better for fellow students who don't have the resources to pay for birth control.

"My hope is that once this plan goes into effect, it will bring down the number of teen pregnancies," she says. "I don't know if that is going to happen; but since it's free, I would hope that people will take the initiative to use it." **WTH**





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story by // stephanie bouvia

# "THE PILL" FOR GUYS?

New research shows male birth control may not be too far from the market SU students and staff discuss whether or not they think men would use this contraceptive.

**THE IDEA OF GETTING A HORMONE INJECTION**, taking a pill every night, or having an object implanted under the skin as a form of birth control may seem a little daunting for men. But, the truth is, male birth control may be available and on the market soon.

Research is being done on male contraceptives in China, Europe, Canada, and the United States. Reversible Inhibition of Sperm Under Guidance, or RISUG, is a method of male birth control that is currently being researched, says Jenna Weintraub, an outreach and education specialist for Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/ Syracuse Region. RISUG is a silicone plug that is inserted into the vas deferens. It breaks the cell membranes of sperm present in ejaculation. Without that membrane, the sperm cannot dissolve the cell wall of an egg, and are rendered infertile.

Weintraub, who has done extensive research on male contraceptives, says she is confident that if given the option, men would be willing to use contraceptives in the form of pills, injections or patches. "I think a lot of men feel left out in a way," says Weintraub. "Research shows that men are ready and willing to take part in birth control." In about five years we can expect

the start of clinical trials of RISUG in the U.S., Weintraub says.

According to a recent Time article, most male contraceptives started out as treatments for unrelated illnesses. A drug called Gamendazole was first developed as an anticancer drug, but researchers found that it also interrupts the maturation cycle of sperm, causing sperm to be nonfunctional.

Susan Scholl, a Syracuse University department of public health, food studies and nutrition professor says birth control has been the province for women, for better or for worse. "It will be interesting for men of certain generations; it will be more challenging for men of other generations."

Justin Tasolides, a senior television, radio and film major, said he would be hesitant to take male birth control. His concern lies with the potential health risks involved.

"I enjoy sex but I don't find condoms all that cumbersome. Plus [the thought of taking] birth control drugs make me feel odd. I'm sure there are cancer risks," he says.

Weintraub says there needs to be more funding for research of male contraceptives to make them affordable and readily available in the future. **WTH**





story by // katherine anne connolly  
photography by // rebekah mackay

It's 3 a.m. Your body feels exhausted but you just can't fall asleep. This is when some students reach for sleep aids.

According to a recent survey, 33 percent of college students use a synthetic form of melatonin. Melatonin is a natural hormone secreted by the brain when it's dark out to induce sleepiness, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC). While melatonin is produced naturally, its synthetic over-the-counter pill form may cause concern.

The body produces high levels of melatonin during the nighttime and low levels during the day. This determines our internal clock if sleep and waking hours, according to the UMMC. Being exposed to bright lights in the evening or too little light during the day can alter

the body's melatonin production. For example, jetlag and working night shifts can disrupt the melatonin cycle. It comes as no surprise then that college students, with hectic schedules full of late nights and early mornings, sometimes have difficulty falling asleep and might enlist the help of a supplement.

Alexandra Tartell, a senior accounting major at Syracuse University, says she uses melatonin regularly after a late night of caffeine-induced studying. "I take it when I know I won't be able to fall asleep otherwise and it helps me feel sleepy," says Tartell.

The synthetic form of melatonin is sold as a dietary supplement. It is the only hormone sold in the United States without a prescription. Tartell says she hasn't done much research on the supplement. "It is over-the-counter and all natural so I hadn't really thought I needed to."

Because melatonin is contained naturally in some foods, the U.S. Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 allows it to be sold as a dietary supplement, according to the National Sleep Foundation. These do not need to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration or regulated in the same way as drugs. It is made in unregulated factories and side effects are not listed on the package. Furthermore, listed doses are not controlled, which means the amount of melatonin in a pill is not necessarily the same as what is listed on the package. Most commercial products offer levels of melatonin that can cause blood melatonin levels to rise about 1 to 20 times the normal level, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

While Tartell swears by the supplement, Jane Uzcategui, professor at Syracuse University's Department of Public Health, Food Studies and Nutrition says that its effects are not entirely proven. "It's usually useless," says Uzcategui. "Especially in college-age students when there is no melatonin deficiency." The National Sleep Foundation agrees. "When scientists conduct tests to compare melatonin as a 'sleeping pill' to a placebo most studies show no benefit of melatonin," its website says.

"It is more a question of sleep hygiene," says Uzcategui. "It's how much caffeine you are drinking, do you have distractions, do you have a dark place, do you have a laptop when you are going to sleep, do you have roommates? These are the things to alter that can truly affect how much sleep you are getting."

Looks like it's time to just turn off the lights and the laptop for some good old-fashioned shuteye. **WTH**



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# HYDROXY- energy

THE POPULAR DIET PILL  
IS BEING USED FOR  
MORE THAN JUST  
LOSING POUNDS.

story by // brianna sander  
illustration by // nicole wajack



image by // google images

When in need of an energy boost during the day, students often reach for a Red Bull, a 5-Hour Energy shot, Starbucks coffee, or more recently, diet pills. “I’m so productive on Hydroxycut,” says a junior psychology major, who chose to remain anonymous.

Hydroxycut’s advertisement claims that the product is a source of energy. When squeezing in homework and study sessions before a night at the bars, some find that Hydroxycut proves an easy way to remain productive and awake so that they can complete their work with time left over to party. But health concerns exist regarding the pill. Hydroxycut, once banned by the FDA after evidence that it causes liver damage was discovered, was put back on the market (in a reformatted version) only a few weeks later.

Hydroxycut contains as much caffeine as two cups of coffee (200 mg per serving), according to the Dietary Supplements Label Database. Combine caffeine with alcohol and there may be serious consequences. Similar to the concerns with Four Loko, this combination can harm your body.

While many of us don’t have the luxury of napping between classes or sleeping for 10 hours every night, there are several ways we can alter our eating habits to gain the energy we need. “Foods such as fresh fruit or vegetables and almonds, contain omega-3s and fiber; which will naturally boost your energy and focus and provide your body with the nutrients it needs,” suggests Deborah Senenfelder a Pennsylvania-based Health Coach. With simple alterations, like storing a bag of almonds or dried fruit in your bag instead of snacking on fast food you can make the changes you need to balance your lifestyle from the library to the bar. **WTH**



# tension AT OUR FINGERTIPS

How excessive laptop usage puts  
students at risk of **Carpal Tunnel Syndrome**

story by paige carlotti // photography by rebekah mackay

**W**hen it comes to illnesses, college students tend to think they are invincible, or too young to begin worrying about them. When it comes to carpal tunnel syndrome, the situation is no different.

“I don’t even know what carpal tunnel syndrome is,” says Leigh Miller, a freshman magazine major, “nor do I know anyone who has it. Isn’t that for old people?”

The truth is, with advances in technology, students are becoming more susceptible to developing carpal tunnel syndrome in their adulthoods. Students’ excessive laptop usage is a major source, says Kathy Manser, a nurse practitioner at Syracuse University Health Services.

In carpal tunnel syndrome, the nerve running from the forearm into the palm of the hand is pressed or squeezed at the wrist. “Major causes of carpal tunnel syndrome include repeti-

tive motion, namely, computer work,” says Manser. “Students who type on their laptops while sitting on their beds are most vulnerable to this disease because the position causes them to overstretch, further straining their tendons.”

If students find themselves in this position, Manser advises that they take frequent stretch breaks and sit in an ergonomically sound position; that is, one free from strain, like sitting at a desk as opposed to lying in bed.

Carpal tunnel is caused by repetitive motion, says Annie Candela, a physical therapist at the Orlando Regional Health Center. “It is one that develops over time and, therefore, is unlikely to affect people at such a young age.” Although the pain caused by carpal tunnel syndrome may not be experienced until tomorrow, the source of the problem is literally at students’ fingertips today. **WTH**



story by rakelke shapiro // photography by lauren levy

# ARTIFICIAL FOODS, REAL HARM?

For years, people have been consuming food additives such as MSG and aspartame in many processed foods, unaware of the potential health risks



**O**n the back of your mac and cheese box, the ingredients section lists white flour, salt, cheese culture, and about 20 other names you've never heard of, and can't pronounce. Some of these are food additives.

Food additives are integrated with a food product during processing, according to the National Institutes of Health. They're often added to maintain freshness, preserve flavors, and enhance the appearance of food.

While the FDA recognizes approximately 700 food additives as safe, such as vinegar used to pickle foods, artificial ones are potentially harmful. These additives can still be used in food, but only in quantities of one-one hundredth of the amount thought to be dangerous. This requirement aims to protect consumers from eating too much of a harmful substance.

Aspartame, one of the more common additives, is used as a substitute for sugar in products such as Splenda and Equal. In an attempt to reduce their intake of sugar and cut calories, many people use sugar substitutes in their coffee and desserts or drink diet sodas and chew sugar-free gum.

Recently, there has been a movement on behalf of consumers to find foods that contain little to no sugar substitutes. A new chewing gum called Pur gum is aspartame-free and made with xylitol, a naturally occurring sugar alcohol. "I noticed a demand in the food industry for foods that were not artificially sweetened with aspartame," says Jay Klein,

“

**MSG is an excitotoxin that if consumed in high quantities can damage brain cells, potentially causing neurological disorders.”**

**JIM HEALTHY**

President of Pur Gum. This chewing gum has become very popular among health-conscious consumers looking for an alternative to sugar-free gum.

Monosodium glutamate is another popular food additive, used in the preservation of food and also as a flavor enhancer. Commonly known as MSG, it is the sodium salt of the amino acid glutamic acid. However, other concerns have been raised over the safety of MSG. MSG is an excitotoxin that if consumed in high quantities can damage brain cells, potentially causing neurological disorders, says Jim Healthy, co-author of *The Fast Food Diet* and *The 30-Day Diabetes Cure*.

With companies using food additives for a variety of reasons and in varying quantities, it is important to become more aware of the foods they eat. Some students recognize this and have started making a conscious effort to eat fewer processed foods. "I always try to find healthier alternatives to my favorite processed foods," says Remy Seiken, a sophomore retail management major at SU. "So many foods have unnatural ingredients in them now that I think it's important to eat healthy whenever I can." **WTH**

story by // hannah redfield  
photography by // audrey hart

# POPPING PILLS FOR *beauty*

YOUNG WOMEN  
ARE TAKING A  
SURPRISING PILL  
HOPING TO GROW  
LUSCIOUS LOCKS AND  
GORGEOUS NAILS

When it comes to quick and easy beauty fixes, women are always looking for the latest craze. One of the newest trends among young women is taking pills. Not diet pills or pills for breast growth but instead they're popping prenatal vitamins.

Natalia Krawiec, a freshman business management major, has taken prenatal vitamins to help her hair grow for about two years. "I think it works on me because I have naturally really thin hair," Krawiec says.

Prenatal supplements, thought to aid in hair and nail growth, consist of a variety of vitamins and minerals, like iron, calcium, and folic acid, according to the American Pregnancy Association. Folic acid is a synthetic form of folate; which occurs naturally in food and helps produce and maintain new cells, according to the Office of Dietary Supplements at the National Institutes of Health.

Professor Jane Uzategui, a registered dietitian who specializes in life cycle nutrition and medical nutrition therapy at Syracuse University, doesn't think this fad is worth it.

"I am always an advocate of food first," she says. "If you have a balanced diet, you wouldn't need any additional supplements." Natural sources of folate include leafy greens, citrus fruits, papayas, mangos, and egg yolks. She also says that unless you have especially sub-clinical deficiencies, meaning you don't have nearly enough of the recommended intake of a particular vitamin, the hair and nail growth may not even be noticeable.

Uzategui also says that prenatal vitamins wouldn't do anything that a general multi-vitamin can't do. A CVS generic brand prenatal vitamin costs around \$20, while generic brand regular multi-vitamins are only about \$9.99. Buying daily dietary supplements is a cheaper plan and just as efficient.

Although Uzategui says there are no serious side effects, the additional iron that is found in prenatal vitamins may cause constipation. Aside from this discomfort, the only thing that will suffer from taking prenatal vitamins is your bank account. **WTH**





story by: elizabeth carey // photography by: erica fisher and jessica laurello

# CRANKING UP THE NOISE

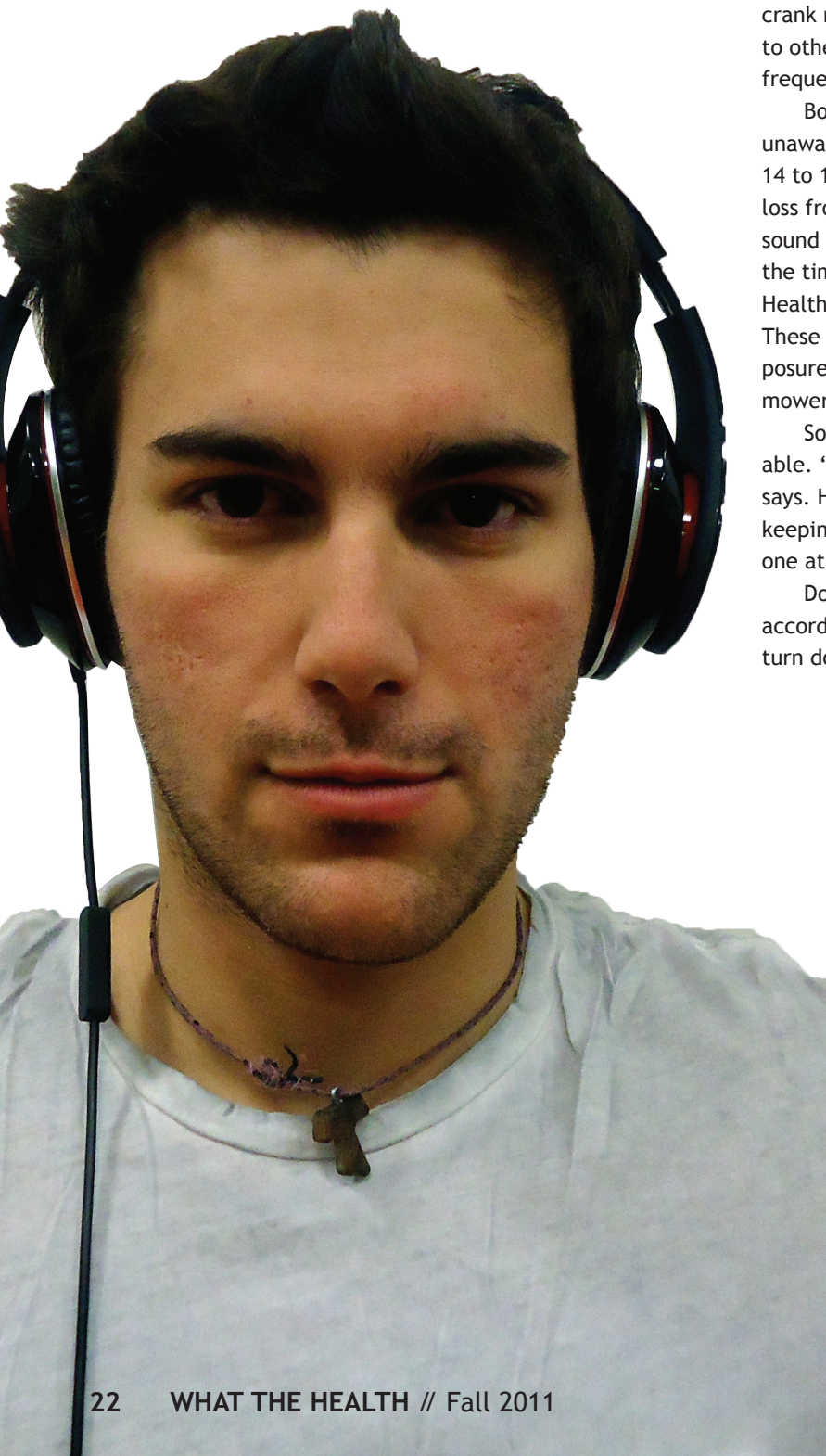
Students harmed by underestimated effects of noise pollution

**IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO HEAR YOURSELF THINK, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.** Noise inundates students across campus, from construction outside Starbucks to music blaring at parties.

Anytime unwanted or disturbing sound interferes with your normal activities, you experience noise pollution, which can lead to a number of health risks, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Noisy disruptions derail health and not just by impairing hearing. Risk of cardiovascular disease, fatigue, and anxiety are caused by noise pollution, according to a World Health Organization report. It can disturb sleep, drive up stress levels, and negatively affect your mood. >>





**N**oise pollution on campus makes it hard to study and sleep. “It’s all hours all the time—it’s even noisy in the library,” says Anell Colon, a sophomore sports and human dynamics major.

The Department of Public Safety frequently receives noise complaints from professors and students. With academic buildings so close to frat row, classes are often interrupted by music and partying on sunny afternoons. “Fraternities, on nice warm days, crank music around 3p.m.,” says Sgt. Sean Corcoran. He responds to other complaints from dorms and about nearby parties, most frequently at night and on weekends.

Bombarded with noise around the clock, people are usually unaware of its potential irreversible damage. Over 16 percent of 14 to 18 year-olds in the United States show evidence of hearing loss from exposure to loud sound. “If they continue this type of sound exposure, they will have the hearing of a 60 year-old by the time they are 30,” says Dr. Billy Martin, a scientist in Oregon Health Sciences University’s Oregon Hearing Research Center. These teenagers face permanent hearing loss from repeated exposure to loud sound including music, gunfire, power tools, lawn mowers, motorcycles, snowmobiles, chainsaws and other sources.

Sounds of heavy traffic, motorcycles, and sirens are unavoidable. “The easiest thing to do is to protect your ears,” Martin says. He suggests avoiding loud areas, wearing earplugs, and keeping your headphone volume down. If you cannot hear someone at an arm’s length away, your iPod is too loud, Martin says.

Don’t count on a doctor to fix damaged ears; there’s no cure, according to the National Institute of Health. Your best bet is to turn down the volume when you can. **WTH**

### DID YOU KNOW?

Sound is measured in units called decibels. On the decibel scale, an increase of 10 means that the sound you hear is 10 times louder. The humming of a refrigerator is 45 decibels, a normal conversation is approximately 60, and noise from heavy traffic can reach 85, says the National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Firecrackers or small firearms can emit anywhere from 120 to 150 decibels of sound. Repeated exposure to sounds at or above 85 decibels can cause hearing loss.