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GET YOUR SEASONAL ALLERGIES BEFORE THEY GET YOU!

Spring brings with it many wonderful things, like longer days, picturesque scenery, and spring break, but right alongside those good things is something most people suffer from: allergies. While beautiful, the blooming trees and flowers make you want to stay away from the great outdoors for fear of nonstop sneezing or puffy, watery eyes. If you suffer from allergies caused by pollen, grass, or other spring plants, take these steps to breathe a little easier.

When outside, avoid walking through areas with weeds, shrubbery, or lots of trees as much as possible. Grass and weeds are notably problematic. The slightest breeze can send particles flying through the air in the blink of an eye. When you walk through grassy areas, pollen will get on you, your clothes, and your hair. It's best to stick to trails, sidewalks, and other paved areas.

If you do find yourself inundated with pollen or other allergens, your next best bet is to establish an at-home decontamination protocol. Take your shoes off at the door and make sure your clothes don't come in contact with soft surfaces such as carpet, upholstery, or bedding. Take care to wash your "pollinated" clothes as soon as possible and wash

your sheets and pillowcases weekly. Next, head for the shower. The sooner you can wash away the allergens, the better.

Finally, don't forget to replace the air filter in your home's air system in the spring. Consider using an air filter designed to capture allergens. If your allergies are particularly troublesome, invest in a dedicated air filtration system or unit. While you can opt for portable, stand-alone air purifiers, there are larger systems that can be incorporated into your heating and air system that keep your entire home's air free from most, if not all, common allergens.



MY ADVENTURES AS A BOLLYWOOD DANCER (YES, REALLY!)

REMEMBERING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2014

As soon as I was exposed to Bollywood films, I've been fascinated by Bollywood dancing. I loved watching Bollywood movies like "Ek Tha Tiger," "Happy New Year," and "Bajirao Mastani." Whenever dancers appeared on screen, I was riveted by their gorgeous costumes, beautiful movements, and larger than life production. It was all so ostentatious, whimsical, and over the top that I thought "I have to try that someday". My all-time favorite is the Dhoom series and when I had the chance to be a part of a dance production to the songs of Dhoom, I jumped on it!

One of the best Bollywood dancers in the world, Kavita, moved to New Jersey, and I was lucky enough to meet her. Kavita has been dancing since she was 4 years old when she saw the famous Bollywood dance movie "Sagara Sangamam" in theaters. As she tells it, she was so enchanted watching Kamal Hassan dance on screen that she busted some moves right there in the aisle!

Ever since, she's been an unstoppable force in dance, teaching semiclassical, folk, Bollywood, Indian fusion,

contemporary, and Caribbean dance all over the world. She's won dozens of competitions in India and beyond and even performed for Sonia Gandhi (a politician in India) and Shankar Dayal Sharma, the ninth president of India. It was a real privilege to meet her.

When I heard that a Bollywood dance legend like Kavi was teaching classes at the Watchung Arts Center, I knew I had to go for my dream. I signed up and danced my heart out in the gallery. I enjoyed learning the dances so much that I joined Kavi's competitive adult dance team. Eventually, she outgrew the gallery and started her own dance school, Kavi's School of Dance. (Once, I even had the chance to treat Kavi for TMJ pain. At one point, she couldn't move her jaw or leave her room, but with our help, she got back to dancing onstage. (You can read that full story on our Facebook page.)

Dancing on the adult team was an amazing experience, and one of the highlights happened almost exactly seven years ago. For International Women's Day 2014, Kavi's School of Dance was selected to provide backup dancing at a local music festival called Womaania. Bollywood singers and actors flew in from all over the world to make appearances at the event, and my team got to dance during their performances!

It was crazy to share the stage with celebrities, and even crazier to try and keep up with them. We were as prepared as we could be, but sometimes the crowd would call for an encore, and we had to dance on the fly. I can still remember one of our choreographers, Mady, frantically

guiding us through a series of moves from a spot just out of sight of the audience. Even though I don't practice Bollywood dancing regularly anymore, I'll never forget the euphoria of that night onstage. I was proud to use my skills to uplift and empower other women on International Women's Day.

Of course, there were a few mishaps in my Bollywood career. Once, I missed a cue in the middle of a competition when I got stuck in one of the bedazzled Bollywood skirts during an outfit change. And during Womaania I stepped on a pin that had fallen out of my teammate's costume! I left a few bloody footprints on the stage but still finished the whole routine.

I loved dancing in the Bollywood style so much that I still drop by Kavi's for classes when I can. If you or someone in your family likes to dance, I would highly recommend checking her out. She's hosting both virtual and in-person classes during the pandemic, and you can find a full list at KaviSchoolofDance.com. In the spirit of International Women's Day, I'd also like to shout out one more woman-owned business that keeps my body moving: Pilates Design Studio. The studio is located right here in our building, so next time you come in for an appointment, consider dropping in for a workout, too! Exercise is incredibly important for your overall health, including the health of your teeth.

To your great smiles and better health,

-Dr. Michelle Weddle



Backstage at Womaania

THE SEAL OF ACCEPTANCE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ‘ADA ACCEPTED’?

The American Dental Association (ADA) stamps its seal on all kinds of dental products, such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, mouthwash, denture cream, gum, and more. But what does the ADA Seal of Acceptance mean?

The ADA Seal of Acceptance was first used in 1931 as an act of regulation. At the time, numerous dental products were flooding the market. Sellers, including those who would fit the description of snake oil salesmen, were peddling all sorts of “miraculous” teeth-cleaning products to “cure cavities” and “regrow lost teeth.”

In response, and to help direct the general public to legitimate oral care products, the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs put together a series of guidelines that defined what legitimate oral care products were. The organization used the guidelines to determine if a product was safe and worked as intended. Today, over 200 products bear the ADA Seal of Acceptance.

To become ADA Accepted, a product must meet certain criteria. First, the product must be put through rigorous clinical or laboratory studies. This is the responsibility of the product maker. The ADA does not conduct these studies itself and relies on outside consultants when evaluating products. These experts are from all areas of the dental industry, including microbiology, toxicology, chemistry, and dental materials. They review the results of those studies to determine whether or not that product meets its standards of “safety and efficacy according to the product category developed by the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs.”



If the ADA is satisfied that the product meets its safety and efficacy requirements, it will award the seal for a five-year period. In that time, the manufacturer of the product can use that seal on the product they submitted for acceptance, such as toothpaste. However, if the manufacturer decides to change the product — for example, they change the ingredients — the seal is no longer valid and the company must send in new research on the safety and effectiveness of the updated product.

If you see the ADA Accepted logo on a product, it means that item has gone through a lot of research to determine that it does exactly what the packaging says it does. It’s just another way consumers can protect themselves from misleading claims and false advertising. That said, just because a toothpaste or mouthwash doesn’t have an ADA Accepted designation doesn’t mean it’s bad. There are some products the ADA *will not* accept under any circumstance. This includes any toothpaste that does not contain fluoride. The most important thing you can do as a consumer is read the label of any oral care product you buy to understand what it is you are purchasing and if it meets your own standards.



AN EASY WAY TO DRINK MORE WATER AND AVOID DEHYDRATION

Dehydration is a big problem. Many people don’t drink enough water each day — some reports show that 75% of adults in the United States don’t drink enough water, and over a quarter are dehydrated. Though those statistics aren’t widely agreed upon, it’s obvious that most people need more fluids.



Even if it feels like you’re drinking a lot of water, remember that water leaves your body every time you sweat, go to the bathroom, and even breathe. Not keeping up with proper water intake can lead to dehydration. Even mild dehydration can cause health problems and impact your brain, heart, skin, and other organs, which can lead to headaches, confusion, fatigue, and gastrointestinal distress.

We all know the solution to dehydration is to drink more water, but exactly how much water do we need each day? The amount will differ depending on the person, but one simple way to approximate your necessary daily intake is by dividing your body weight in half and drinking that much water (in fluid ounces) each day. For example, if you weigh 175 pounds, you’d need to drink 87.5 fluid ounces — over half a gallon — of water per day.

That might seem like a lot of liquid, but you can easily drink it without trying too hard. All you have to do is be proactive: Start keeping water any place you frequent during the day. Keep a bottle in your car, at your desk, by your favorite chair, near your workout equipment, etc. Having water easily available in the places you spend the most time each day helps increase your chances of actually drinking it.

An alternative approach is to purchase a giant jug that can hold all the water you need to drink in a day. Seeing it all in one place might be intimidating at first, but this method makes things *very* simple. Keep the jug close, and your water intake will likely increase without too much additional effort. And if you’re just not motivated to drink plain water, you can always add sugar-free flavoring or lemon to make it more enticing.



- ### INGREDIENTS

 - 1 lb prepared whole-wheat pizza dough, divided into 6 equal portions
 - 12 oz asparagus spears, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
 - 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1/4 tsp salt
 - 1 cup shredded smoked mozzarella cheese
 - 1/3 cup scallions, thinly sliced
 - 2 tbsp walnuts, toasted and chopped
 - 1 sprig of fresh mint leaves, torn
 - Zest of 1 orange
- ### DIRECTIONS

 1. Preheat oven to 500 F and ensure there are two racks in your oven.
 2. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper, stretch each piece of dough into a 7-by-3-inch oval and arrange evenly on the pan.
 3. On a second baking sheet, toss asparagus with oil and 1/4 tsp salt.
 4. Place dough on top rack and asparagus on bottom and bake for 3 minutes.
 5. Remove both trays from the oven, sprinkle cheese over the dough, then top with asparagus and scallions.
 6. Return pizzettes to oven and bake until the crusts’ edges are golden, about 8-10 minutes.
 7. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with walnuts, mint, and orange zest before serving.