

### 3 MEDICAL CLICHÉS

Here's an oft repeated health myth that deserves debunking, if only to tell your mother she was wrong: cracking knuckles and popping joints does not cause arthritis, enlarged joints or any other problem.

The University of California Berkeley Wellness Newsletter offers this explanation as to what causes the sound: Joints contain fluid. When gas forms in the joint fluid, it can create a bubble. As you bend the joint you collapse the bubble, releasing gas and producing the harmless popping noise.

"Feed a cold, starve a fever" is another famous health dictum that needs discrediting. In fact, whether you have a cold or a fever, starvation shouldn't be on your list of remedies. You need plenty of fluids for both ailments, and you should eat when you feel hungry.

Finally, whoever coined the term "no pain, no gain" was obviously not a fitness expert. Studies have proven that those who go from sedentary to moderately active achieve greater health benefits than those who are already moderately active and become very active. In other words, the gain levels off. So it is more prudent to work out moderately, thereby reaping the cardiovascular benefits of exercise while keeping the risk of injury low.

—adapted from *Cooking Light* and Southwest Airlines' *Spirit*

### SOBERING NEWS ABOUT OBESITY

By: Doug Horne

Believe it or not, spring is just around the corner. As the weather grows warmer, our thoughts once again turn to the great outdoors. Or do they? According to results of the 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 64% of all adults

between the ages of 20 and 74 are overweight and 31% are considered obese. This is a very significant increase in the last 20 years. In 1980, an estimated 47% of the adult population was overweight and 15% were considered obese. If these figures don't disturb you, then perhaps they should. Once an individual is considered obese, their chances of suffering health problems increase dramatically. Being overweight puts additional stress on your body to say the least. According to the Institutes of Health, you are overweight if your body mass index is between 25 and 29.9 percent. You are considered obese if your body mass index is greater than 30 percent. The body mass index is the most effective way to calculate body fat. You can determine your body mass index by dividing your weight (in pounds) by your height (in inches) and then dividing that number by your height again, then multiply that number by 703.

The main factors that are contributing to this epidemic probably won't surprise you. Inactivity and a significant increase in our average calorie intake are the primary reasons behind the problem. The "Super-size" fast food craze and wonderful inventions like the Playstation have collaborated to create this pitifully out-of-shape country we call home. We should pay serious attention to this situation, for it has the ability to reverse all the advancements that have been made in cardio-pulmonary health as well as other areas. The problem of obesity isn't confined to adults. It is estimated that 15% of young people ages 6 to 19 are overweight.

Most experts contend that this problem can be combated by simple exercise and sensible eating habits. This is the type of problem that can slowly undermine a country even as strong as our own if it isn't dealt with. As spring approaches, take a few moments to evaluate your health. Don't do it for the sake of how you look necessarily, but do it for the sake of feeling better and living healthier.