

# BODY & HEALTH

## Bungee cords: all fun and games, until ...

By KATHERINE DEDYNA

Victoria eye surgeon Lawrence Brierley felt "heartsick" when the emergency call came: another bungee-cord accident.

Because these elastic cords can recoil at 90 km/h, the hooks attached to them can destroy any eye in their path when they give way without warning.

Twice Brierley has had to remove eyeballs because of bungee-cord incidents.

The outcome for his most recent case, in September, is still uncertain. A man in his mid-thirties was strapping a boat to a vehicle when the injury occurred. He was flown to Royal Jubilee Hospital, where Brierley ensured the eyeball would not be lost before sending him on to a retinal specialist on mainland B.C. From what he saw, the eye will not be very useful other than for telling whether the lights are on or off.

Brierley has treated five bungee cord injuries in his career and is convinced most users are unaware of the threat they pose. "It's as violent as they come," he says. "It's like a wartime injury."

When Chilliwack Giants football player Dave Bosch was helping his father secure equipment on a truck in 2004, a bungee cord snapped off suddenly. "There was no eye left," he later said.

The accidents tend to affect people who don't seem to be risk takers, says Brierley. "If people understand how dangerous they [bungee cords] are, maybe they'll be a little more circumspect in their use."

He uses ropes, never bungee cords. "Maybe a short one is safe. I think if you've got a long one, it's a gamble. You never know when it's going to release, and if it happens, it's just such a catastrophe."

There are already warnings on bungee cords. Both small packages and large cylinders with several cords sold at a downtown Victoria hardware store advised in very small print: "Always use protective eyewear. Avoid rebound injury by stretching to the side, never toward or away from body."

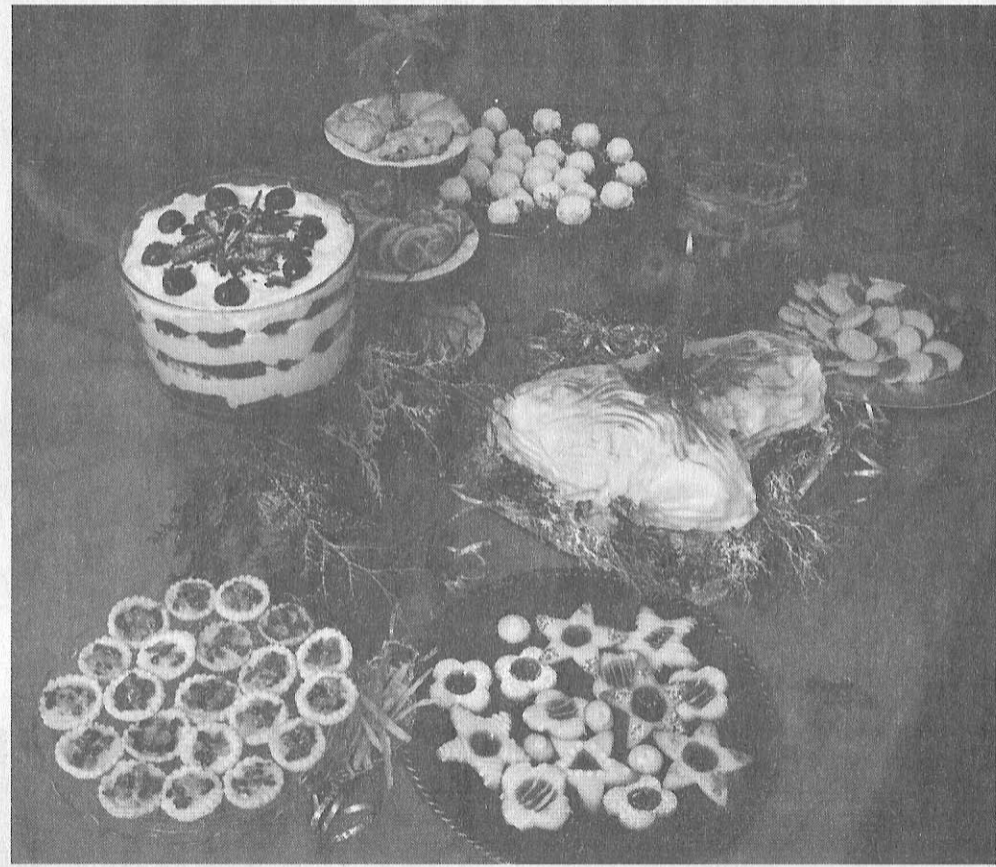
American researchers have asked manufacturers to make cords safer by using spring-loaded gate clips that release only when pressed.

A 2001 study in *Ophthalmology* showed 20% of 67 people treated for bungee-cord eye injuries at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia over five years experienced profound vision loss.

"Most of the injuries occurred when one of the bungee cord hooks was released from the object it was secured to, rather than cord or hook failure," the study said.

Males make up the majority of victims, with recreational injuries overtaking workplace accidents.

CanWest News Service



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Festive treats are delicious, but overeating can lead to unwanted winter weight.

## This holiday season, a few simple steps can help you indulge while keeping fit

# PACK SNOW, NOT POUNDS

By JENNY LEE

For many of us, December might as well be a synonym for weight gain. Time for fitness is short and stress is high. But why wait for the bleak, dark days of January to roll guiltily toward the gym? The experts share tricks on how to combat the holiday season bulge before it even gets going.

**1. Don't starve yourself before a party.** Skipping a meal makes the body think it's in starvation mode, says registered dietitian Gloria Tsang, Dietitians of Canada representative. When the next meal comes along, you will tend to eat more. Instead, have a healthy pre-party snack so you won't arrive starving and head straight for the appetizers.

**2. Pick the best.** "Pick your favourite indulgences," says Sandy Ennis, Weight Watchers B.C. member services manager. If your favourite is shortbread, for instance, and you think it will be at every party, indulge at one or two and abstain otherwise.

**3. Make a plan.** Write down a step-by-step plan for how you will make it through the holidays, Ennis suggests.

**4. Tune up your family traditions.** Put physical activity into the mix. Make it fun and keep it simple, says Bev Siver, ProMOTION Plus executive director.

**4. Go for momentum.** Exercise just gets easier and easier with momentum. Start the ball rolling now and not only will you see substantial results by Christmas, you'll be way ahead of the curve in January.

**5. Weigh your choices.** Two Nanaimo bars have about

the same calories as a baked chicken breast and baked potato with light sour cream and chives.

**6. Change your cardio routine.** If you always do the stationary bike, try a shorter session on the elliptical trainer or treadmill. Or simply increase your intensity on the bike. If you're strapped for time, break it up. Three 10-minute sessions are just as effective as one 30-minute one, and may be easier to fit into a busy schedule.

**7. No yo-yoing.** Don't try to lose weight now in anticipation of gaining over the holidays. Your body will think it's yo-yo dieting which over time, can decrease immunity, increase blood pressure and in-

crease your chances of regaining weight fast, Tsang says.

**8. Pick your booze.** The higher the proof, the higher the calories. Alcohol doesn't make you feel full, so it's easy to drink 300 to 500 calories without blinking, Tsang warns.

**9. Skip rest breaks in the gym.** You can probably cut one-third of your gym time by being efficient.

**10. Save 100 calories here and 50 calories there.** It really makes a difference, says Tsang. Skip the turkey skin and you'll save 100 calories. Dip into gravy rather than drowning your plate can save 80 calories.

**11. Forget perfection.** Blowing your plan is OK. Just pick up and keep going.

### SMART CHOICES

**Which is better? Dietitian Gloria Tsang examines some favourite Christmas treats.**

**Ham vs. turkey**

Skip the turkey skin and you've got a low-fat meat with lots of nutrients. Ham generally contains 15 times more sodium than the same amount of turkey.

**Soft vs. hard cheese**

If you're counting calories, choose soft cheese; if you're after calcium, eat the hard.

**Gingerbread cookies vs. chocolate-dipped shortbread**

Gingerbread cookies usually contain half the calories, sugar and fat found in chocolate-dipped shortbread.

**Candy cane vs. truffle ball**

The candy cane is 100% sugar, has 55 calories and lasts forever. The truffle ball contains about 85 calories and will contain some antioxidants if it's made with good dark chocolate.

**Red vs. white wine**

Red wines, unlike whites, are loaded with beneficial antioxidants.

**Wine vs. beer**

A 12-ounce can of beer has 150 calories. A five-ounce glass of wine contains 140 calories.

National Post

## MEDICAL REPORT

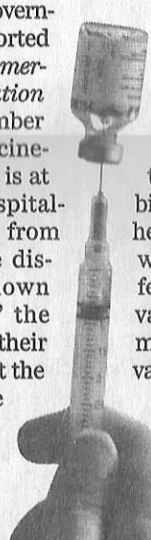
### BINGE DRINKING MAY NOT HARM FETUSES

**London** Pregnant women who occasionally overindulge in a night of drinking may not be harming their fetuses, but more evidence is needed to determine whether this is really the case, British researchers said yesterday. A number of studies have linked heavy drinking on a regular basis during pregnancy to stunted growth, birth defects and brain development problems. Less clear is the effect of occasional binge drinking, and researchers found little substantive evidence binge drinking once in a while caused problems such as miscarriage, stillbirth, abnormal birth weight or birth defects such as fetal alcohol syndrome. *Reuters*

### VACCINES ARE 99% EFFECTIVE: RESEARCHERS

**Washington** Vaccines have cut deaths from the diseases they prevent by 99%, U.S. government researchers reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* on Tuesday. "The number of cases of most vaccine-preventable diseases is at an all-time low; hospitalizations and deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases have also shown striking decreases," the researchers wrote in their report. They looked at the rates of both disease and deaths for illnesses prevented by vaccines, most given in infancy and childhood, and

found they have worked as intended. Sandra Roush of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and colleagues examined the illness and death rates for 13 vaccine-preventable diseases. "Vaccines are one of the greatest achievements of biomedical science and public health," Roush and her team wrote. Parents have expressed fears about the safety of vaccines, and in some communities, groups have refused vaccination. The researchers said this has been shown to endanger both those who do not get vaccinated, and people they come into contact with. *Reuters*



### JUVENILE DIABETES RESEARCH ADVANCES

**Paris** Scientists yesterday said they had uncovered two more genetic links to juvenile diabetes as the United Nations backed World Diabetes Day to place a spotlight on this fast-growing form of the disease. In research published in the British journal *Nature*, experts pointed the finger at variants in two genes, HLA-DQB1 and HLA-DRB1, as boosting the risk of Type 1 diabetes. The genes control rogue proteins that apparently play a role in destroying insulin-producing islet cells in the pancreas and in accelerating the disease. There is no cure yet for the disease, but earlier warning can encourage dietary change and swifter glucose control, thus helping to stave off potentially life-threatening complications. *Agence France-Presse*

### SLEEP STRATEGIES FOR BABIES MAY ALSO BENEFIT MOTHERS, STUDY FINDS

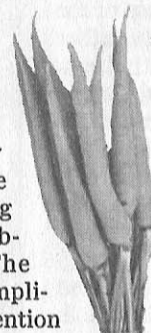


**New York** Teaching new mothers strategies to help their babies overcome sleep problems yields significant benefits for both of them, according to a study conducted in Australia. Dr. Harriet Hiscock, of the Royal Children's Hospital, and associates report their study in this month's *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. The study entailed having a trained nurse determine the nature of the sleep problem, identify solutions and write a sleep management plan with the mother. Better overall sleep for children also improved mothers' sleep and reduced depression associated with maternal sleep deprivation. *Reuters*

### BETA CAROTINE AFFECTS MENTAL STABILITY

**Washington** Men who take long-term supplements of beta carotene — an antioxidant found in carrots and other vegetables — may enjoy less cognitive decline, according to a U.S. study published Monday. The study could have implications for the prevention

of Alzheimer's and other debilitating mental conditions. Beta-carotene, which gives carrots their orange colour, is broken down by the liver to become a form of vitamin A and is also helpful against damage caused by free radicals. Other sources include spinach, sweet potatoes and coriander. *Agence France-Presse*



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