

# TROPICAL LIFE

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IN MY OPINION  
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## Life's become a real pain in the password

**W**ait! Didn't I just finish doing a switchover of all my passwords?  
 About three months ago, when the Heartbleed encryption bug was discovered, I painstakingly sifted through all my online accounts — banking, social media, investments and emails — to change every single one of my dang passwords. There were a lot of them, which was to be expected. After all, I live much of my life online.

Then, as if that exercise hadn't been tedious enough, I had to make sure I jotted down each of these new passwords in a secure place, a lockbox that would keep my secrets far from cyber-thieves. For me that meant a sheet of lined paper filled with my Catholic schoolgirl script.

Yes, yes, I know from my IT-savvy friends that a variety of services can help me store passwords securely. I'm sure these are immensely useful — but I don't have a lot of confidence in them.

Call me old school. More and more I need something tangible — something to hold in my hands and sniff with my nose — to overcome my growing suspicions of a world changing too quickly.

The cheat sheet was short-lived anyway. After a few weeks of typing in these passwords, I had memorized most of them. I felt proud of my aging but still-nimble brain.

But now, thanks to a crime ring thousands of miles away, I'm back to inventing new passwords. I suspect I'll be doing this every few weeks, as recommended by security experts who tell us that sorry, chump, our data are not safe, no matter how many firewalls a website builds in.

This latest breach is the work of Russian twentysomethings living in a small city somewhere near Mongolia. (Halfway around the world, to be sure, but their tentacles are far-reaching and powerful.) Last week, Milwaukee-based Hold Security discovered that this crime ring had collected more than a billion username and password combinations, as well as 500 million email addresses.

Yours could be among them. So could mine.

This is a scary thought.

In an email sent company-wide, my employer concluded that none of the employee log-in credentials had been compromised, but “we do strongly suggest that you consider changing all of your passwords for personal and professional online accounts as quickly as possible.”

Hence, the rush to execute the password pirouette.

Perhaps the most disconcerting part of these hacks is that most of us are only semi-literate with the complex terms and rules of programming, botnets and zombie computers. We feel helpless and overwhelmed. Stupid.

We aren't the only ones nursing such feelings. A New York Times article on the Russian hackers reported that data security breaches have gotten larger,

• TURN TO PASSWORDS, 2E

## Give your kid an 'A' in eye care

Standard school-provided screenings are not enough to ensure students can read that smartboard or tablet, South Florida experts say

BY CRYSTAL CHEW  
 cchew@MiamiHerald.com

Not too long ago, kids who wore glasses were made fun of with names like “Poindexter” or “four-eyes.” But thanks to celebrities like Johnny Depp, Tina Fey and LeBron James, glasses have become hip and even considered a fashion statement.

“Some kids actually make up not seeing well to get glasses when they are actually seeing perfect,” said Dr. James Hagen, an optometrist in Kendall. “The old stigma is not true anymore.”

This may come as a form of relief for parents with kids who don't see well and need glasses to do well in school, as their numbers are increasing.

According to the American Optometric Association, nearly 25 percent of school-age children have vision problems and are not receiving adequate professional eye and vision care. Only about one-third of all children have an eye examination or vision screening prior to entering school.

“The reason that this generation sees so poorly is that they are the first generation born into technology where their whole life they've had computers, iPads and iPhones,” Hagen said. “The more people work without resting their eyes, the higher chance they may develop myopia.”

Myopia, also known as nearsightedness, is a

• TURN TO EYES, 3E



EYE APPEAL: LeBron James, top, and Tina Fey, below, are just two of the celebrities who have made eyewear hip these days.



### SKIN CANCER

## Rise in melanoma cases raises alarm



PREVENTION: Apply two tablespoons of sunscreen to your entire body — even on skin that clothes will cover — before going outside. Reapply every two hours or after swimming.

BY BRADY DENNIS  
 The Washington Post

Acting U.S. Surgeon General Boris D. Lushniak wants to shine a spotlight on the nation's ever-growing number of skin-cancer cases, calling it a “major public health problem that requires immediate action.”

In a report last week, Lushniak highlights some disquieting facts about the disease and its most deadly form, melanoma. Each year, 63,000 new cases of melanoma are diagnosed in the United States, the report says, and there are an estimated 9,000 annual deaths from the disease, many of them involving teenagers and young adults. (The American Cancer Society uses slightly different statistics.)

• TURN TO SKIN CANCER, 3E

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## NUTRITION

# Why do we love to eat stuff that's so bad for us?

BY LENNY BERNSTEIN  
The Washington Post

We know we shouldn't. We hate ourselves when we do. And yet, with all the information available about proper nutrition and the dangers of obesity, we still eat things like Red Robin's "A.I. Peppercorn burger with bacon, Bottomless Steak Fries and a Monster Salted Caramel Milkshake." That combo captured one of nine "Xtreme Eating" awards recently from the Center for Science in the Public Interest, clocking in with 3,540 calories (almost two days' worth for an average person), 69 grams of saturated fat (3 1/2 days' worth), and 6,280 milligrams of sodium (about four days' worth). And it contains 38 teaspoons of sugar.

I read the center's report a day after returning home from two weeks in Japan, where, you're probably aware, life expectancy is greater than in every nation except tiny Monaco and the Chinese territory of Macau, according to *The CIA World Factbook*, which lists the United States 42nd. And in Japan, the obesity rate runs at a little over 3 percent, compared with about 35 percent in the United States.

I understand that life expectancy is a complex mix of genetics, lifestyle and other factors, but the contrast in eating habits in the two nations is jolting (as is the knowledge that today's U.S. children may be the first generation in 200 years to live shorter life spans than their parents). I traveled most of Japan without seeing anything remotely like the Red Robin burger or

the Cheesecake Factory's slab of "Peanut Butter Chocolate Cake Cheesecake" (1,500 calories, 43 grams of saturated fat, 21 teaspoons of sugar), another Xtreme Eating award winner.

The Japanese diet, as many know, is based heavily on rice and noodles, with plenty of vegetables and small bits of fish, chicken, pork or beef. Desserts are small by our standards, and often consist of fruit. All of it is served in what Americans would consider tiny portions, on small plates or in small bowls, instead of heaped on one large plate.

On the Japanese island of

Okinawa, home to a greater proportion of centenarians than anywhere in the world, many follow the practice of pushing away from a meal when they are 80 percent full.

## OH, THOSE CALORIES

According to a 2006 study by the University of Minnesota, Americans consume an average of 230 more calories each day than the average Japanese (2,168 vs. 1,930), and exercise much less — mainly because Japanese adults walk so much more as part of everyday life.

All of which raises the question: Why do so many

of us still eat so poorly?

David Kessler, the former administrator of the Food and Drug Administration who wrote the influential book *The End of Overeating*, said the problem is a combination of the addictive salt, fat and sugar added to most foods and social mores that allow the consumption of vast quantities. (Full disclosure: Kessler is on the board of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, though he had nothing to do with the recent report.)

Kessler's research showed the addictive quality of salt, fat and sugar, and a food industry that pushes it

to keep us buying. "I'm tired, I'm restless, it's a long day, I want to basically calm down. In order to calm down, I need to, in essence, zone out. My circuits are all firing, and I want to be in a different place," he said.

"If I give you fat, sugar and salt, and I can attract your attention and I can stimulate your affective circuitry, and I can do that for the next 25 minutes while you're eating this stuff, you're not thinking about anything else."

According to Jayne Hurley, a senior nutritionist at the Center for Science in the Public Interest who con-

ducted the most recent study, almost half our food dollars are now spent eating outside the home, where, in most places, we find menus that still don't tell us how many calories we're consuming.

"The bottom line is people just have no idea how many calories they're eating," and portions just keep getting bigger, she said. "I don't think people know what a normal portion of food is. We've taught people that a drink is 32 ounces."

Muffins used to be about two ounces, she said. Today, they are five ounces. The older size "looks teeny-tiny. A . . . normal portion is now called 'petite' or 'bite-size,'" she said.

When the organization started its food survey in 2007, Hurley said, it was shocked to discover a 1,500-calorie entree. Now, most on the list are in the 2,000-calorie range, and some reach 3,000.

Kessler and Hurley both said they have begun to see some restaurants offer smaller portions and give some emphasis to healthful meals. Change is coming, Kessler said, but it's coming too slowly.

He said society must begin to tackle huge, unhealthy food portions the way he and others went after the tobacco industry: By stripping away its cool and fun image and revealing it for the health hazard it is.

"I'd try to change the social norms," he said. "I'd go after big food. And I would go after things that are sold as food when there's no real food in it. It's just highly processed fat, salt and sugar."



**OFF THE CHARTS:** The Cheesecake Factory's slice of "Peanut Butter Chocolate Cake Cheesecake" (1,500 calories, 43 grams of saturated fat, 21 teaspoons of sugar) was an Xtreme Eating award winner. The foods cited by the Center for Science in the Public Interest had stratospheric calorie counts along with high levels of sugar and saturated fats. Few countries routinely serve such extraordinarily fattening desserts.

## SKIN CANCER

# Thousands die of melanoma, sometimes needlessly

• SKIN CANCER, FROM 1E

The report, the first time the surgeon general has publicly focused on skin cancer, urges ordinary Americans to take long-recommended preventive steps such as wearing sunscreen and seeking shade when outdoors. But it also calls on other sectors of society, from researchers to policymakers, to play a role in turning back the tide of the disease.

Lushniak spoke to *The Washington Post* about the report:

**Q.** Can you explain the urgency around this issue?

**A.** Right now we're seeing kind of a bad trend developing when it comes to skin cancers. Skin cancers — melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer — are increasing. It got to the point for us, right now, to be able to say, "We need to have this call to action."

Certainly, this time of year, we're in the midst of vacation season. It's the last big spurt of people heading to the beach, people spending time having that poten-

tial exposure to ultraviolet radiation. We thought now was a really good time to get the message out.

**Q.** As you noted, the number of melanoma diagnoses seems to be increasing while other forms of cancer are decreasing. Can you explain why that is happening?

**A.** It's difficult to say. We've seen increases, almost a tripling over the last 30 years. And, of course, the question is: Is it based upon ultraviolet exposure? Increased outdoor activities? The indoor tanning industry and artificial sources of ultraviolet radiation? From our perspective, the real concern is that this is an increase, and we need to do something about it.

**Q.** But we don't know for sure what's causing the increase?

**A.** In essence, we really don't. From the epidemiological-surveillance perspective, we see the numbers increasing. But in terms of looking at specific causes, it's still difficult to determine.

**Q.** Your report mentions indoor tanning. What role do we believe indoor tanning plays in melanoma? And what more can be done about that? There are state regulations. The Food and Drug Administration has proposed some tighter regulation on tanning beds.

**A.** I've got to, as acting surgeon general, call out the facts. And the facts are that indoor tanning is a source of ultraviolet radiation, period. Ultraviolet radiation is a known carcinogen, period. This is a needless exposure to ultraviolet radiation. According to research . . . we're looking at about 400,000 cases of skin cancer, about 6,000 of them melanomas, that are estimated to be related to indoor tanning in the United States each year. So I have to look at this as being a major problem. We certainly know it's something that's become popular amongst youth. And much like the surgeon general comes out very vehemently against youth smoking, I am coming out quite vehemently against youth exposing their skin to ultraviolet radiation in tanning booths.

**Q.** How do you look at melanoma in comparison to other cancers? There are cancers that more people die from than this.

**A.** I am a dermatologist, so this is an area I've been passionate about. I've trained in skin diseases. I've seen patients with a variety of skin cancers, including people who have died from skin cancer. And it brings to the forefront the facts about melanoma. It's the deadliest form of skin cancer. Each year we have 63,000-plus cases diagnosed, nearly 9,000 people die. That's one person every single hour that's dying from melanoma. I mentioned the increase over the past 30 years. But also, it's one of the most common types of cancer amongst U.S. teens and young adults.

So when we're looking at impact, the term in epidemiology that we use is "years of potential life lost." We're really talking about a tragic disease here, something that really affects the young. That's something, from a public-health perspective, we have to do something about.

## Skin cancer facts

What is skin cancer, and how can you avoid it? There are three main types:

**Melanoma:** The most deadly.

**Squamous cell and basal cell:** The most common in humans, the slowest-growing and also the easiest to treat.

In African Americans, squamous cell carcinomas occur mainly on the legs and genital area, and sometimes arise from scarring or chronic inflammation, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. They can be more aggressive and dangerous for African Americans than for whites, due in part to later detection and treatment. Smoking and infection with human papillomavirus are risk factors, according to Ali Hendi, a spokesman for the foundation.

For Caucasians, sun exposure is the greatest risk factor for all types of skin cancers. Although darker-skinned individuals enjoy greater protection than their more-pale counterparts, they are not immune.

People of all ethnicities should heed the following guidelines from the Skin Cancer Foundation:

- Seek the shade, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Do not burn.
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths.
- Cover up with clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- Use a broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Apply one ounce (two tablespoons) of sunscreen to your entire body — even on skin that clothes will cover — 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours or immediately after swimming or excessive sweating. Use sunscreen year-round and in all kinds of weather, including overcast days.
- Keep newborns out of the sun. Sunscreen should be used on babies older than 6 months.
- Examine your skin head to toe every month.
- See a physician every year for a professional skin exam.

## EYE CARE

# Eye experts: Standard screenings are not enough

• EYES, FROM 1E

vision condition in which close objects are seen clearly, but objects farther away appear blurred.

For Hagen, who owns a family practice, his clientele has changed drastically. At one time, his No. 1 age group came from people in their 40s. Now, the top group is kids from 10 to 19 years old, followed by children younger than 9.

"This generation of kids see the worst of any generation before them at this age," he said.

For public school students in Florida, vision is checked through eye screenings that are mandated for children in kindergarten, first, third and sixth grades. It is also required for

new students entering Florida public schools for the first time in grades kindergarten through five.

But some local optometrists believe that may not be adequate.

Dr. Richard Myers, an optometrist in West Miami-Dade, said the screenings pick up big issues "but I think there are much more subtle problems, where many children fall in the cracks."

The screenings given by the Department of Health, which are done at the schools, are not full indications of eye health, he said.

"It's really a fallacy, you can't just go by 20/20," he said.

Experts recommend having children's eyes examined earlier than kindergarten

## Resources

For more information about the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program, visit [http://www.miamilighthouse.org/Florida\\_Heiken\\_Program.asp](http://www.miamilighthouse.org/Florida_Heiken_Program.asp) or call 305-856-9830.

and every year or, at minimum, every two years.

The earlier the detection and treatment, the less the potential impact eye problems may have on a child's development.

"Generally if a person has one or both parents who wear glasses and they are under 45, the child is likely to inherit those propensities to need glasses as well," said Dr. Allan Levitt, an optometrist in Miami Beach.

Parents and teachers can spot indications of issues. The more obvious ones are cosmetic where a child's eyes are not straight or the

child may be squinting, holding reading material too close or sitting too close to the television.

"Some students are resilient and they can overcome their difficulties," said Dr. Vanessa Marino, an optometrist in Kendall. "Unfortunately other children's vision is so bad it's hard for them to pay attention."

Marino believes that often children get labeled as having attention problems because of this.

"I get referrals from psychologists, who before labeling or doing any tests on them, they have them get

their eyes checked," she said. "You'd be amazed how many people don't fit the diagnosis once they have their glasses on."

There are other indications that parents never attribute to eye health, like getting tired during the day, frequently complaining about headaches and performing poorly in school. Many optometrists believe that a lack of success in school is often tied to issues with vision.

"There's a very strong correlation between vision problems and juvenile delinquency in the middle to later grades," Levitt said. "If it goes uncorrected for a long time, the child might get frustrated."

Eye exams, glasses and contacts prices vary de-

pending on the office and the specification tailored to each child. Some children may be covered under the Affordable Care Act or Medicaid programs.

And for those who are not covered, the Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program provides free eye examination and eyeglasses to children whose parents can't afford eye-care and don't have insurance. The program is run through the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Last year, the program provided more than 8,000 eye exams.

"Parents of all socioeconomic levels are uninformed about the necessity to have eye exams for their children," Levitt said. "It's not just the kids from the poor neighborhoods."