Spot Check

Some quick and easy steps for self-improvement—one problem area at a time.

June 1, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

BRAIN: Forget where you parked the car? Relax—it's probably not AIDS dementia. But a far milder HIV-related condition called brain fog can strike young and old alike. Aerobic exercise has been shown to keep the mind sharp; so can video games like Brain Age 2 ($19.99; play on Nintendo DS, $129). Work many different brainteasers, like Sudoku, math games and concentration—all in the palm of your hand.

HEART: Many positive people already boost their heart health with omega-3 oils, getting them from supplements or from foods such as salmon and sardines. For a less fishy alternative, try soybeans—soy protein can reduce your risk for heart disease. We like Seapoint Farms Dry Roasted Edamame (4 ounces, about $1.50). Packed with 14 grams of soy, each serving will serve your ticker well.

ABS: Crunches are the most powerful way to tone your upper abs and obliques, but they don't do much for the hard-to-reach lower stomach. Try this move three times a week—no mat required. Strengthening your abs will also help improve your balance.

Standing Pelvic Tilt (three sets of 15 reps)

- Step 1: Lean your back firmly against a wall with your legs together, knees slightly bent, feet about six inches from the wall. Your lumbar spine (small of your back) will not be touching the wall.
- Step 2: Engage your core muscles and tilt your pelvis forward until your lumbar area touches the wall. Hold for five seconds.
- Step 3: Return to original stance and repeat.

KIDNEYS: Are you a cola addict? According to a recent report, people who drink two or more cans of soda a day—regular or diet—are two times more likely to develop kidney stones and renal problems than those who down one or none (or non-cola drinks). That's especially troublesome for some positive people, as certain HIV meds, and the virus itself, can cause kidney problems.

Yes, drinking eight glasses of water daily will hydrate you, but plain old water can be boring. Spice it up with Crystal Light On The Go (14 pack, $4.99), in flavors such as Hydrating Lemon and Sunrise Orange, with only five calories per packet.

BUTT: Is your rear drooping? Whether you blame it on aging or the fat loss caused by lipodystrophy, building your gluteus maximus muscles can help you get your back back. Try this easy exercise:

The Butt-builder (three sets of 10 reps)

- Step 1: Lie facedown with forehead touching the floor (or bench) and hands under hip bones.
- Step 2: Without raising your head or neck, lift legs behind you, bending knees slightly.
- Step 3: Hold for 10 seconds, then relax and repeat.

LEGS: Feeling wobbly? Squats are one route to strong legs; walking uphill is another. Experts say we should take 10,000 steps a day.

A pedometer is an encouraging way to keep track. We like EBF-W03 Multi-Function pedometers ($20, everybodyfit.com). You'll tone your legs and your heart, too.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/fitness-problem-areas-14613-6889