

Ask the Experts

Have a health-related question?

Send it to us at *Bottom Line/Health*, Box 10702, Stamford, CT 06904-0702... or via e-mail to BLHealth@Boardroom.com.

New coffeemaker safe?

My office recently switched to the Keurig coffeemaker, which uses individual plastic cups for brewing. Are they safe?

The individual packages (called K-Cup and Vue packs) used to brew beverages in Keurig coffee machines do not contain *bisphenol A* (BPA), according to the manufacturer. BPA, a chemical used in many plastic containers and metal cans, is believed to disrupt the endocrine system and has been linked to reproductive disorders, heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer.



However, researchers continue to study other chemicals in plastics to see if they might possibly leach into food and water and create health problems. Until more is known, old-fashioned stainless steel percolators and ceramic pour-over models may be the safest coffeemakers, since they contain no plastic.

Patricia Hunt, PhD, researcher, School of Molecular Biosciences, Washington State University, Pullman.

Raw egg warning

After watching a rerun of the movie Rocky, my husband started putting a raw egg in his breakfast smoothie. Isn't that dangerous?

A breakfast smoothie can be a smart, speedy and scrumptious way to get needed nutrition in the morning. And having a nutrient-rich egg as part of your morning meal is a high-quality, protein-packed way to kick off the day. But having the two together is not advisable when the egg is raw. Eating raw eggs increases your risk for foodborne illness. Plus, raw eggs contain a

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form of protein called *avidin* that can bind and prevent absorption of *biotin*, an essential B vitamin—heating eggs deactivates the *avidin*. The best solution is to savor a cooked egg any way you choose—and sip a smoothie alongside. Or if you want to punch up the protein in your smoothie itself, add a dollop of Greek yogurt or a spoonful of raw hemp seeds rather than a raw egg.

Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN, culinary nutritionist in New York City and the author of *The With or Without Meat Cookbook* (American Diabetes Association). JackieNewgent.com

Help for bladder infection

My daughter recently started taking D-mannose supplements because she gets frequent bladder infections. I've never heard of it. Is it safe?

Yes. Our clinic physicians often recommend *D-mannose* for bladder infections. *Why it's effective:* *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) bacteria stick to mannose molecules on cells that line the bladder, causing most bladder infections. *D-mannose* coats each E. coli bacterium and prevents it from sticking to the bladder wall. The E. coli bacteria then wash out of the body during urination. Follow label instructions.

If there is no significant improvement in symptoms after using *D-mannose* for 24 hours, your daughter should consult her doctor, since it's likely that the infection

is not caused by E. coli.

Jonathan V. Wright, MD, medical director, Tahoma Clinic, Tukwila, Washington. TahomaClinic.com

Can't stop burping!

What can I do to stop belching?

Belching is your body's way of getting rid of too much air in your stomach, so you need to find out what could be causing the excess air. *Some well-known triggers:* Eating or drinking too fast...talking while eating...chewing gum...sucking on hard candies...using a straw...and drinking carbonated beverages. *Triggers you may be overlooking:* Certain medical conditions, such as *gastroesophageal reflux disease* (GERD) or stomach inflammation, or even poorly fitting dentures, can cause burping, so consult your doctor if avoiding the more common triggers described above does not help.



Also, some people don't realize that they swallow air in response to stress. If you seem to be belching more after stressful situations, see a behavioral therapist who can help you develop techniques to reduce air swallowing.

Douglas Drossman, MD, codirector, University of North Carolina Center for Functional GI & Motility Disorders, Chapel Hill. *med.UNC.edu/ibs*

“You cannot do a kindness too soon because you never know when it will be too late.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist and poet (1803–1882)