

BONE DENSITY

Calcium loss, cola link?

HEALTH CLINIC



CLARE ROWSON, MD

Q: Is there any research suggesting a correlation between consuming carbonated drinks and depletion of calcium in the body?

A: Let me make a distinction between carbonated drinks such as sparkling water or Perrier and pop or sodas. Carbonated drinks do not leach calcium out of your body, but it is a different story with the dark coloured pops such as colas.

They contain phosphoric acid, which has been shown to be problematic.

Dr. Katherine Tucker, a researcher at Tufts University in Boston, looked at the bone mineral density readings of more than 2,500 adult men and women and surveyed their soft drink consumption.

She found that women who drank more than three 12-ounce servings of cola per day had 2.3 to 5.1 percent lower bone mineral density in the hip, compared with women who consumed less than one serving per day.

The same finding did not seem to apply to men or those drinking only colourless pops.

It is believed that the phosphoric acid in colas binds with the calcium in the stomach and cannot easily be absorbed into the body.

Men might be protected because they generally have higher bone density. They also tend to drink more alcohol than women on average, and alcohol has been thought to have a slightly protective effect.

Drinking too much cola is even worse for children whose bones are still growing.

Fatty liver

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) occurs when normal liver cells are replaced with fat. Eventually this condition causes scarring or cirrhosis and/or liver cancer. The end result is liver failure.

NAFLD is now the most common liver disease in North America. Many patients are unaware that they even have this problem because there may be no obvious signs or symptoms for several decades.

It may be picked up with routine blood tests for liver function.

When the disease is more advanced, there may be nausea, weight loss, fatigue, lack of energy and poor concentration.

In the late stages, there is internal bleeding and muscle wasting in addition to ascites, a buildup of fluid in the abdominal cavity and jaundice, yellow skin and yellow whites of eyes.

If it is not too far gone, the disease is reversible if the person can slowly lose at least nine percent of their weight over a period of months. He or she should also avoid alcohol.

Clare Rowson is a retired medical doctor in Belleville, Ont. Contact: health@producer.com.

SECRETS TO THE "AHHH" PHOTO

Take a spring prairie wildlife photo safari

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

Have your camera set at a high shutter speed so you are ready to shoot when wildlife appears

Looking for a short break at this busy time? Grab your camera, hit the road and capture the wonders of spring.

Wildflowers are emerging, wildlife is active and outstanding numbers of birds are ready to party in their finest mating plumage. If you like wildlife photo safaris, spring on the Prairies is hard to beat.

Avid birdwatchers and photographers from other parts of the country may travel a long way to be here in spring. We prairie folk just have to take a short drive down the road.

We like to cruise along backroads lined with potholes and wetlands. Ducks, geese and other waterfowl are easiest to find, but there might be shorebirds, songbirds, hawks sitting on posts, foxes playing next to dens and other surprises.

An effective way to photograph is from inside your vehicle because it's almost like having a portable blind. As long as you stay inside and don't make noise or sudden moves, wildlife largely ignores you.

A telephoto lens helps with wildlife, especially birds. We use a bean bag over the open car window to provide a base to keep the camera steady.

Most fun is photographing colourful antics during spring mating season. The guys go all out to catch the gals' eyes and put on some dramatic displays.

One of the easier ones to photograph is the male ruddy duck, which uses bubbles as part of his act. He pumps his sky-blue bill up and down, whacking it against his thick neck. This makes a drumming sound and creates some impressive bubbles in the water. He finishes off by belching. What female could possibly resist?

More challenging to photograph is the lightning-speed antics of bufflehead ducks. Couples or competing males half-run and half-fly across the surface of the water, making a big fuss with plenty of splashing.

A more elegant ritual is performed by American avocets. The best place to find them and other shorebirds is on the edge of shallow wetlands with muddy shores.

When a couple mates, they often do a quick circular pirouette dance, sometimes crossing bills while one wraps a wing around the other. Fortunately, avocets are less skittish than many birds, so it's possible to get remarkably close if you stay in your vehicle.

The key to wildlife photography is to be ready because things happen quickly. Critters don't wait patiently while we change lenses or fiddle with camera settings.

We usually travel with a telephoto lens on the camera, set on aperture



TOURISM AWARD

Robin and Arlene Karpan won the travel media award at the 26th annual Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala, held in Saskatoon April 16.

Their most recent book, *The Great Saskatchewan Bucket List: 50 Unforgettable Natural Wonders To See Before You Kick the Bucket*, highlights the province's most spectacular natural attractions.

priority and the widest aperture setting (the smallest number). We set the ISO at 400 or higher in low light.

By letting in more light with a high ISO and wide aperture, the camera will fire at a higher shutter speed, increasing the chances of getting a sharp photo. If we suddenly come across wildlife, the camera is ready to grab and shoot.

For wildflowers, landscapes and other stationary subjects, there's time to change lenses and settings and lower the ISO. A potential problem with high ISO is "noise," where the photo might look grainy, so a lower setting is preferable when speed isn't an issue.

Some fully automated cameras may limit how many setting changes you can make, but it's still possible to take decent photos. The important thing is to get out and enjoy the springtime show.

For more information, visit our blog at www.photojourneys.ca.

Arlene and Robin Karpan are well-travelled writers based in Saskatoon. Contact: travel@producer.com.



ABOVE: Using a bean bag helps steady the camera while photographing from a vehicle.

LEFT: Love is in the air for American avocets doing the mating dance.

BELOW: Two male bufflehead ducks run and fly across the surface of the water in a courting display to impress females.

BOTTOM: Red foxes play at their den. | ARLENE AND ROBIN KARPAN PHOTOS

