

## RAISING FUNDS, RAISING HOPE

There's always lots of fund-raising buzz during breast cancer awareness month. Here are just two initiatives.

➤ **Women referred to the Princess Margaret Hospital Rapid Diagnostics Clinic can have a physical exam, mammogram and tissue biopsy – and get the results back – in a single day, thanks to the fund-raising efforts of local comedians. Judy Croon, cofounder and MC, got the idea for “Laugh Lines,” a stand-up comedy show that raises money for the clinic, after her own mammogram. “I remember waiting for results afterward – it was torture,” she says. The event has raised more than \$500,000 since the first show, in 2003. The volunteer performers will put on “Laugh Lines” once again on Oct. 1 and 15 at Yuk Yuk’s in Toronto. For more information, visit [www.laughlines.ca](http://www.laughlines.ca).**

➤ **The Braz for the Cause gala, to take place this year at the Western Fair Entertainment Centre in London, Ont., on Oct. 17, raises money to pay for costs of breast cancer treatment that are not covered by provincial health insurance, such as wigs, child care and transportation. Now in its fourth year, the all-women gala invites guests to decorate their bras and wear them over costumes, and features a bra parade and breast painting. For info, visit [www.brazforthecause.com](http://www.brazforthecause.com). – Katie Drummond**



Looking for the perfect gift for a nervous mom-to-be? Make her delivery a little more relaxing with *Labour of Love*, a CD that uses visualization exercises and music to help women have a calm and controlled birthing experience.

Diane Bodnar Rusk, a mother of two in Minesing, Ont., who used visualization techniques during her pregnancies, decided to help other women hoping for a low-stress birthing experience. As well as the 10-step

relaxation program to use during delivery, the CD also includes soothing music to relax a newborn – and a worn-out new mom!

To buy *Labour of Love* (\$12.95), visit [www.smoothlabour.com](http://www.smoothlabour.com).

– K.D.

## We Have a Winner!

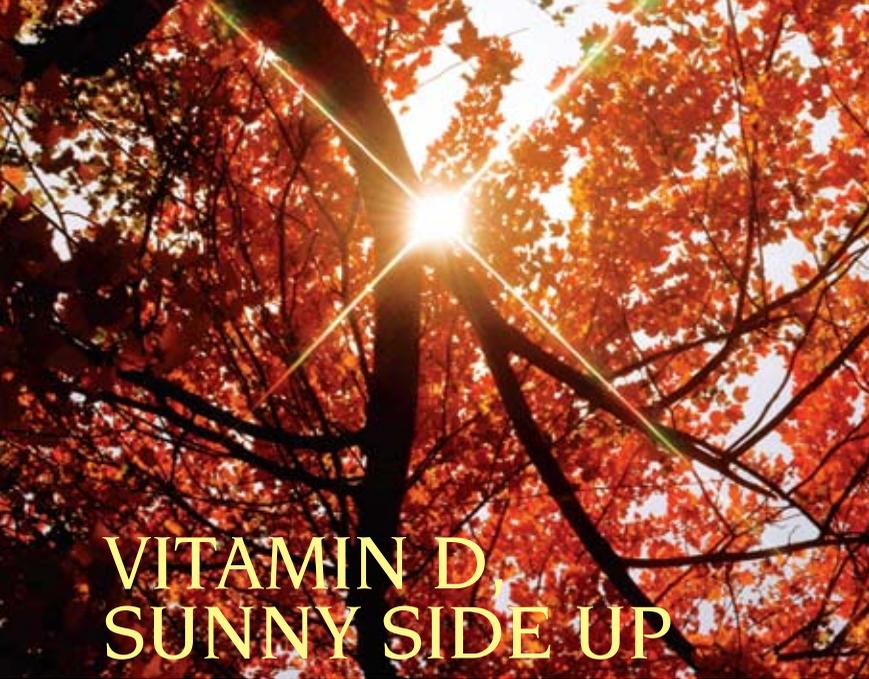
Congratulations to Mark Witten, a regular *Canadian Living* contributor, who won this year’s Sanofi Pasteur Medal for Excellence in Health Research Journalism.

His article “The Miracle Makers,” published in the October 2007 issue of *Canadian Living*, provided a comprehensive overview of recent advances in spinal cord

research in Canada. The article touched on recent discoveries and developments in the fields of neuroprotection, muscle rehabilitation, regeneration and transplantation.

The competition is sponsored by Sanofi Pasteur, a Canadian vaccine company, and Canadians for Health Research, a nonprofit organization committed to promoting the stability and quality of Canadian health research. – Pauline Anderson





# VITAMIN D SUNNY SIDE UP

The sunshine vitamin is making headlines again, with new research turning up vitamin D deficiencies in infants and toddlers.

In a study of 380 children between the ages of eight and 24 months, researchers at Children's Hospital in Boston found that 40 per cent of the children had low blood levels of vitamin D. Low vitamin D levels can lead to weak, brittle bones, and the vitamin has

been linked to a lower risk of cancer and kidney disease in adults.

The Canadian Paediatric Society suggests that at-risk babies receive daily vitamin-D supplements, including those who:

- are exclusively breast-fed;
- are not exposed to adequate sunlight;
- have darker skin; and/or
- live in northern communities.

—Katie Drummond

## CASPER CLEARS THE AIR

More than three million Canadians have asthma, making it one of the most prevalent chronic conditions in the country. In an effort to help patients manage their illness, researchers from the Mayo Clinic have created Casper – a computer game designed to teach effective strategies for managing asthma.

The program offers story-like simulations of various emergency scenarios and asks participants to select the appropriate steps to take. Players then receive

feedback that explains the best response in the given situation, such as encountering smoke when dining out or waking up with an asthma attack. Researchers hope the simulations will offer valuable information on reducing and avoiding attack triggers, selecting the right medications and handling an attack.

The Mayo Clinic group, led by Dr. Kaiser Kim, also plans to use Casper as a model for simulations to address other health issues, including insulin management and nutrition.

—K.D.

## From Wii to You

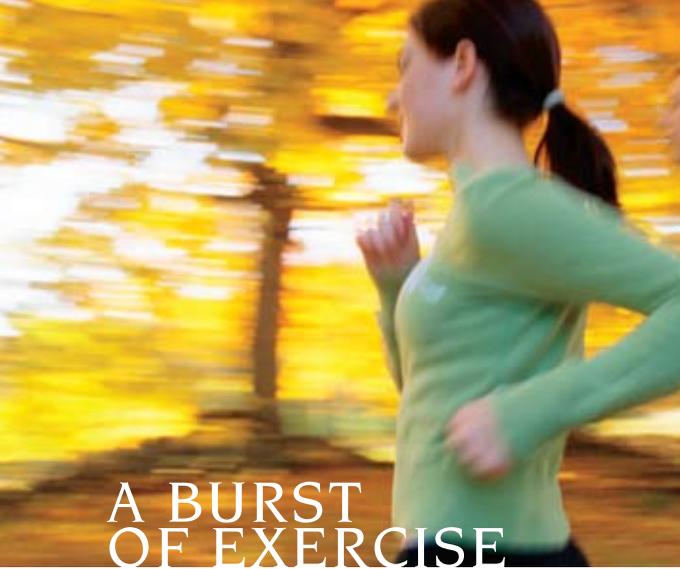
Today's kids spend some 40 hours a week plugged into television or the Internet, according to the most recent estimates from Active Healthy Kids Canada. But for parents who can't get their youngsters away from the tube, there's finally some good news: Nintendo's Wii Fit, a video fitness program that lets your family transform from couch potatoes to fitness freaks – and keep the TV on.

Players can break a sweat in the privacy of their own homes, choosing from more than 40 games in four categories: yoga, aerobics, balance and strength training. Make it a family affair with a slalom ski competition, or enjoy a yoga session with your virtual trainer after the kids are asleep. As your fitness level improves, you'll earn points to unlock more challenging activities.

The game uses a Wii Balance Board, a platform that doubles as a scale and tracks your BMI, posture, balance and movement. Every time you log on, the Wii Fit gives you the option of evaluating your Wii Fit Age and lets you set new fitness goals. A little shy about the entire family following your daily weigh-ins? Fear not – the Wii Fit includes password protection for those sensitive numbers. The Wii Fit retails for \$89.95 at major electronics outlets across Canada.

Another new healthy gaming initiative – also used with the Nintendo Wii – is "My Weight Loss Coach." The game, which comes with a pedometer, motivates users into adopting healthy eating and physical activity habits through 10-minute daily sessions. Approved by the Montreal Heart Institute, the game includes tips, quizzes, challenges and coaching sessions. Available in English, French and other languages, the game retails for \$39.99 at major department and gaming stores.

—K.D. 



## A BURST OF EXERCISE

You don't need to log mega-hours at the gym each week for your workout to be heart-smart. A new study from McMaster University in Hamilton concluded that short bursts of high-intensity exercise offer the same cardiovascular benefits as long-duration, moderate sweat sessions.

Researchers compared people who did three interval training sprint workouts each week to those who completed five cycling workouts. The first group performed 30-second "all-out" sprints during their cardio sessions, while the cyclists used moderate effort over 40- to 60-minute workouts. After six weeks, both groups saw equivalent benefits to their arterial structure and function.

— Katie Drummond

## A Legacy Blossoms

When Sophia De Jonge was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997, she wanted to help her three daughters make lifestyle changes that might reduce their risk of getting the same disease. Frustrated by the lack of teen-friendly assistance available, De Jonge launched The Pink Tulip Foundation to promote healthy living among teen girls.

De Jonge passed away in May, but her friends have continued her efforts. The Pink Tulip now offers a website ([www.pinktulip.ca](http://www.pinktulip.ca)) with easy-to-understand information on breast health, and advice on the lifestyle choices that can reduce the danger of developing cancer. Young women whose mother or loved one has been diagnosed can find

resources and connect with other teens, and girls who want to volunteer or raise money for breast cancer will find links to get started.

The group hopes to reach more girls through their Facebook and MySpace communities, and this month they'll be holding tulip bulb planting events throughout Toronto. — K.D.

PHOTOGRAPHY, POLKA DOT IMAGES/JUPITER UNLIMITED

# Are Migraine Headaches Disrupting Your Life?

## You May Qualify For a Research Study If You:



- Are 18 to 65 years old
- Experience 5-14 days with a migraine per month
- Have ever experienced any of these symptoms before or with a migraine:
  - Vision changes
  - Tingling
  - Blurred vision
  - Difficulty speaking
  - Numbness
- Have tried at least 2 medications prescribed by your doctor and taken everyday to prevent migraines

Participants will be seen by a doctor and receive all study-related care, including travel, at no cost. Patients may receive an investigational device.

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