

## Editor's notes:

January was named for the Roman god Janus, the god of doors and gates, who held the first day of the month sacred. Janus is often depicted with two faces, one looking forward and the other backward. This may have led to the practice of taking stock of oneself and making resolutions to change.

Historians believe Numa Pompilius added January and February to the end of the 10-month calendar about 700 B.C., giving January 30 days. In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar added an extra day to the month. Some interesting January dates are:

**Clean Off Your Desk Day, January 9** -- Jeffrey Mayer, author of *Winning the Fight Between You and Your Desk*, says that 60 percent of the papers piled on a messy desk have little value or meaning. A clean desk can save an hour a day.

**Saint Anthony's Day, January 17** -- Saint Anthony is the patron saint of lost items. Catholics hold that if you've lost something, it's quickly found by saying: "Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony, please come around, something is lost and can't be found." According to the Catholic Church, Saint Anthony was 105 when he died on this date in 356.

**Robbie Burns Day, January 25** -- On this day, hundreds of Scottish clubs and societies will meet to honour their favourite poet, Robert Burns, born in 1759. Dinners begin with "piping in the haggis," a procession of people wearing kilts, led by a bagpiper. (Haggis is a large sausage.) Then the master of ceremonies reads Burns' poem called "To a Haggis," cuts the haggis and says the famous Selkirk Grace, composed by Burns:

***Some hae meat, and canna eat,  
And some wad eat that want it:  
But we hae meat and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thankit.***

The evening finishes with Burns' famous "Auld Lang Syne."

**Freethinker's Day, January 29** -- The Truth Seeker Co., a publishing firm established in 1873, sponsors this day as an annual celebration of the birth of Thomas Paine. He was one of the leaders of the American Revolution, as well as the author of *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason*.

## Think Quick!

People who make resolutions for the new year usually make losing weight their top goal. Very few choose brain fitness as part of their top 10. But for many of the aging baby boomers this should be our number one priority. Robert Goldman thought a lot about strengthening the muscles of our mind and wrote *Brain Fitness: Anti-Aging Strategies for Achieving Super Mind Power*. He emphasized using areas of your mind that you usually don't. Here are some examples of empowering your mind:

- **Change your habits** -- Wear your watch upside down or on the other wrist.
- **Develop other-handedness** -- Use your other hand to do tasks such as brushing your teeth or jotting down notes or numbers.
- **Expand your reading universe** -- Most people stick with a certain type of reading material. Pick up a copy of *Scientific American* or *Forbes* to read about something foreign to you.
- **Memorize poems** -- Start with something short and gradually master longer verses.
- **Practice your spatial skills** -- Work on a Rubik's cube, or try sketching real-life, three-dimensional objects.
- **Investigate a musical instrument** you know little about -- for example, the harpsichord, clarinet or drums. Listen to music that features the instrument, or just try listening to a new kind of music -- opera, Gregorian chants or blues, for example.
- **Instead of using a calculator** or a computer software program to balance your chequebook, do the math by hand.
- **Watch a movie with the sound off** and try to figure out the personalities of the characters by watching their actions.
- **Read upside down** -- Start with a few sentences, and gradually move on to whole paragraphs as you become more adept.
- **Pick a year** from your past and try to remember as many events from it as possible.

Happy New Year to all our friends and customers from Helix Courier Limited.  
May 2011 be safe and healthy and fulfilling and profitable for everyone!

# Why Eat Your Vegetables? Not Just To Get To Dessert Faster!

Mother always said, “Eat your vegetables.” The problem is that too many of us still aren’t listening to her. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 26 percent of U.S. adults eat three or more servings of vegetables a day, although current recommendations call for four to five servings. The benefits are significant: Eating the right kind of vegetables in the appropriate quantities can cut one’s risk of diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure, and other serious illnesses.

What kinds of vegetables should you be eating? Well, all kinds, but here’s what you’re getting:

- **Fiber.** Beans and other high-fiber vegetables fill the stomach, reducing your cravings for more food while reducing

cholesterol levels and improving digestion and regularity.

- **Potassium.** Tomatoes, sweet potatoes, spinach, and winter squash improve blood pressure. They may also reduce the risk of kidney stones and bone loss.

- **Vitamin A.** Carrots, pumpkin, kale, collard greens, and other veggies enhance the health of eyes and skin. Beta-carotene and other carotenoids cut one’s risk of macular degeneration, cataracts, coronary artery disease, and stomach cancer.

- **Folates.** Asparagus, black-eyed peas, spinach, and other folates consumed during pregnancy help prevent birth defects, especially to the spinal cord, and help the body form red blood cells.

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## Don’t Get SAD During the Winter Season

The skies turn gray, days are shorter, cold weather sends us indoors—for most people, the winter months are a long slog, but a manageable one.

For some people, though, it’s a different story. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of depression that typically begins in the fall and lasts until spring, may affect up to 5 percent of adults.

Though many of us suffer some form of “winter blues,” the symptoms of SAD are deeper and more serious. They include:

- Depression, including feelings of sadness, anxiety, or irritability;
- Fatigue and a need to sleep more than usual;
- Weight gain;
- Increased appetite, particularly for carbohydrates like pasta and bread;
- Loss of interest in familiar activities, including sex;
- Difficulty with concentration and processing information.

Because SAD is associated with diminished sunlight during the fall and winter, therapy includes treatment with bright light. Patients sit in front of a light-emitting box for a half-hour or so, usually in the morning. Antidepressants and counseling are also used to help sufferers control their symptoms.

For more information, see Dr. Norman Rosenthal’s book *Winter Blues* (Guilford Press), which is recognized as the definitive work on the subject.

Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each New Year find you a better man. *Benjamin Franklin*

## Blame Your Genes If You Like Taking Risk

If rock-climbing, skydiving, and bungee-jumping sound like completely normal activities to you, the reason may be in your genes. Scientists have reported identifying a dozen gene mutations that appear to be associated with the urge to be a daredevil.

A fondness for extreme experiences is connected to the chemical dopamine, a neurotransmitter that carries messages inside the brain. Researchers studying addiction examined more than 200 genetic mutations—eventually narrowed down to 12—observed in genes with roles that involved dopamine. The 12 genes, when combined, seem to explain most of the difference between the brains of “sensation seekers” and others.

Though they were studying addiction, the scientists were quick to point out that sensation-seekers aren’t necessarily troublemakers.

“Not everyone who’s high on sensation-seeking becomes a drug addict,” said Jaime Derringer, a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota and the study’s first author. “They may become an Army Ranger or an artist. It’s all in how you channel it.”

