



## A little sugar goes a long way

**Dear Doctor K:** I take several medications for Type 2 diabetes. How can I tell if I'm becoming hypoglycemic? And what should I do if I am?

**Dear Reader:** Like you, many people with diabetes take medications to avoid high blood sugar. The medicines are very effective in preventing or lowering high blood sugar levels.



Dr. Anthony Komaroff

But too much of a good thing can cause the opposite problem: hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. Usually, the symptoms of hypoglycemia are mild. But if the blood sugar level drops low enough, the symptoms can be severe. It may start out as irritability and confusion, but it can quickly escalate to seizures, loss of consciousness and even coma.

Glucose-lowering medications such as insulin, sulfonylureas or glinides are the most common cause of hypoglycemia. But other factors also contribute to low blood sugar. These include too much exercise, too little food or carbohydrates, a missed or delayed meal, or a combination of these factors.

It's important that you recognize the signs of hypoglycemia so you can treat it before it becomes a life-threatening crisis. Symptoms include:

- Nervousness
- Weakness
- Hunger
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Trembling
- Sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Feeling cold and clammy
- Irritability
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Slurred speech
- Double vision

If you experience several of these symptoms several hours after your last meal, or after giving yourself a shot of rapid-acting insulin, you don't need to call the doctor. You can fix it yourself. Immediately eat or drink some sugar that will reach your bloodstream quickly. About 10 to 15 grams of carbohydrate should be enough. That means 4 to 6 ounces of fruit juice, half a can of a regular soft drink, 2 tablespoons of raisins, or some candy, for example. A glass of milk also works well, as do fast-acting glucose tablets.

Some of my patients with diabetes who take insulin and have attacks of hypoglycemia get scared and take more sugar than they need. Despite what I've told them, they figure that if a little is good, a lot will be better. When they check their blood sugar level at home a few hours later, they see that it's too high. So they take some extra insulin, and that can cause hypoglycemia again a few hours after that. Ping-ponging high and low blood sugars are not good for the body.

I encourage you to always carry some hard candy or glucose tablets with you.

*Dr. Komaroff is a physician and professor at Harvard Medical School. To send questions, go to AskDoctorK.com, or write: Ask Doctor K, 10 Shattuck St., Second Floor, Boston, MA 02115.*

## A holistic approach

Yoga brings together mind, body and soul for wellness

**By Lois Tomaszewski**  
Staff Writer

MICHIGAN CITY — “Yoga is not a cult, it is not a religion,” said My Dancing Feet Yoga Studio owner Don Wenig.

“You don't have to take up a special diet, be thin, in shape or be able to twist yourself into a pretzel,” he explained. “Yoga offers an approach for every body. People of all races and religions come to class and love their yoga equally. Yoga does not require a change of belief. Just show up, do your practice, have fun and feel better.”

It is exactly that philosophy that attracts an estimated 15 million people to yoga each year, with the majority of these females and college graduates. More than \$27 billion is spent on yoga products in the United States on an annual basis, according to statistics verified by the NAMASTA, the North American Studio Alliance.

“Yoga translated means ‘union,’” explained Elaine Krause, a yoga instructor associated with the Franciscan Alliance's Omni Fitness Centers. “It is an ancient practice originating in India which integrates the heart, mind and body as a whole. Many of the practices are quite old, while others are young.”

While an exercise routine offers benefits to the physical body, yoga is best known for a holistic approach, benefiting mind, body and soul.

“Incorporating yoga as a lifestyle brings a sense of inner peace and quiet to an otherwise hectic life,” said Wenig. “Aside from building strength, flexibility and balance, classes help to detoxify the body and mind. Yoga helps develop the inner awareness to help love ourselves more fully creating a richer more satisfying life. I can safely say that every student leaves feeling more relaxed, peaceful, healthy and happy. Who wouldn't want more of that?”

Yoga helps increase circulation, Wenig said. The deep breathing techniques adds oxygen to the blood stream, which helps detoxify the systems.

“All of the bodies systems are balanced and detoxified,” Wenig said. “Digestion and elimination are improved. The lymphatic system is cleansed. Blood pressure is balanced.”

Please see YOGA, D2



## Watch the weight

Heavy backpacks can lead to back problems for kids

**By Lois Tomaszewski**  
Staff Writer

MICHIGAN CITY — It is the essential back-to-school necessity — the backpack. For students, it contains their life, literally, chock full of books, their lunch, sports equipment and other items required for day-to-day survival. For parents, however, it can cause concerns, especially if that backpack gets too heavy.

“If worn incorrectly, backpacks can cause pain or injure muscles and joints,” said pediatrician Dr. Razia Begum with Healthline in Michigan City. “Backpacks can cause severe back pain, neck and shoulder pain and can also cause posture problems and can increase curvature of the spine.”

September is designated as National School Backpack awareness month, recognized by occupational therapy providers across the nation. They advise students, parents and educators to follow a “pack it light, wear it right” philosophy.

Michigan City Area Schools director of nurses Linda Bechinski has used this information to create a handout for

### About this story

As part of putting together this story, The News-Dispatch partnered with Michigan City Area Schools, utilizing the math skills of Knapp Elementary School students in Pam Jones' class. Students weighed their book bags to determine mathematical concepts such as mode, median, meridian, range, minimum and maximum weights.

nurses to share with faculty and parents at their schools. It is something that is talked about on an annual basis, she said.

More than 40 million students in the United States carry backpacks. According to an article published by the American Occupational Therapy Association, one study found that six out of 10 students ages 9 to 20 years old reported chronic back pain related to backpacks.

To prevent this, Begum offers the following advice: “Always use both shoulder straps, pack light, tighten the straps, organize the backpack to use all the compartments,” she said. “Bend using both knees when bending down with heavy backpacks; never bend over from the waist when wearing heavy backpacks. Encourage your child or teenager to tell you about the pain or discomfort that may be caused by heavy

Please see WEIGHT, D3



Photo by Lois Tomaszewski

Desiree Orr carries a backpack that weighs nine pounds. Experts recommend that the weight of the back pack should be no more than 20 percent of the student's body weight.

YOGA

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Krause agreed. She said yoga produces a relaxed and clear mind, reduces stress and anxiety, increases body awareness, modifies behavior and a builds better quality of life.

This is accomplished through not only the postures, breathing exercises and movements, but from the discipline, meditation and relaxation techniques that are incorporated into every routine.

“Depending on the style of yoga chosen, the asanas (poses) practiced, can tone the entire body,” Krause said.

It can also increase flexibility and strength, help improve balance, build bone density, relieve stress during the day and create better posture, said Karen Ellison, a yoga instructor with IU Health La Porte Hospital.

“By having a yoga practice, a person does become more toned and flexible,” Ellison said. “Some people might lose weight if they start to become more aware of their body and combine yoga and any other exercise with a balanced diet.”

The best thing about yoga is that it really is



Photo provided

Yoga helps balance the mind, body and soul.

**“Anyone can participate in a yoga program and benefit from the practice. There are classes for all levels and a variety of different styles from which to choose.”**

**Karen Ellison, a yoga instructor with IU Health La Porte Hospital**

accessible and adaptable, the instructors said. “Anyone can participate in a yoga program and benefit from the practice. There are classes for all levels and a variety of different styles from which to choose,” Ellison said. “Yoga is great for everyone, from 3 years old to 90,” Ellison said. “A woman in my Yoga Training

class was 82 and she was amazing.”

When choosing a class Krause suggests finding one that provides the best time, location and intensity to meet individual needs. The key is to make sure it can be maintained easily to build it into a regular practice, she said.

It is also important to seek a certified instructor, even though yoga is more of an individual activity as opposed to a group class.

“It is important to be guided by an experienced teacher,” Wenig said. “Not with the intention of becoming reliant or depen-

dent on the teacher but to make sure that the approach to practice is appropriately suited for each individual.

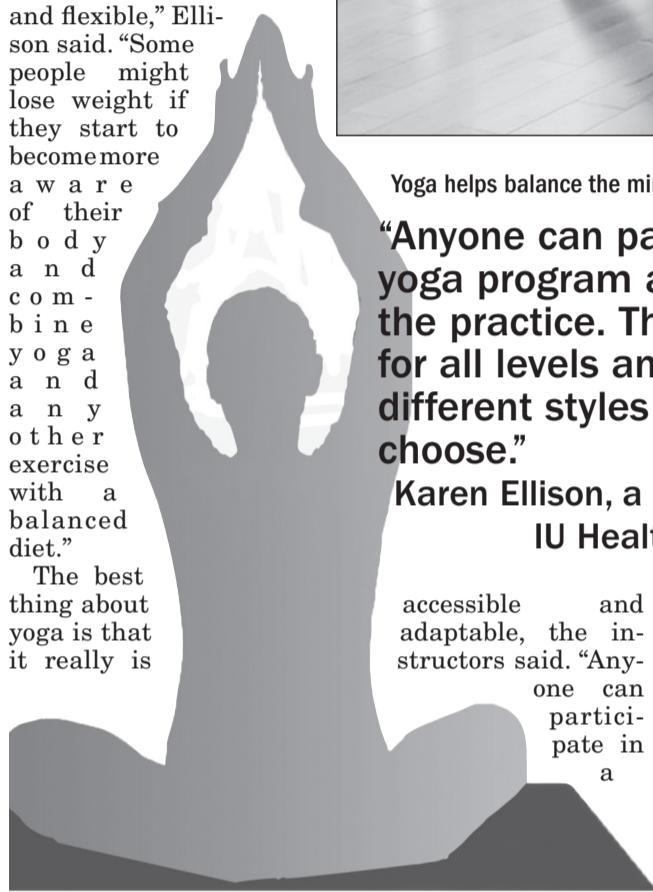
“It’s easy for people to get confused between what they think they want to do and what their body and constitution really needs,” he said. “It takes a highly-trained teacher to be able to guide a student in a safe and appropriate practice. Once the poses and breathing are properly learned the ideal is to take your practice home and do it everyday.”

Making sure a professional is in charge also reduces the possibility of injury, Ellison said. She

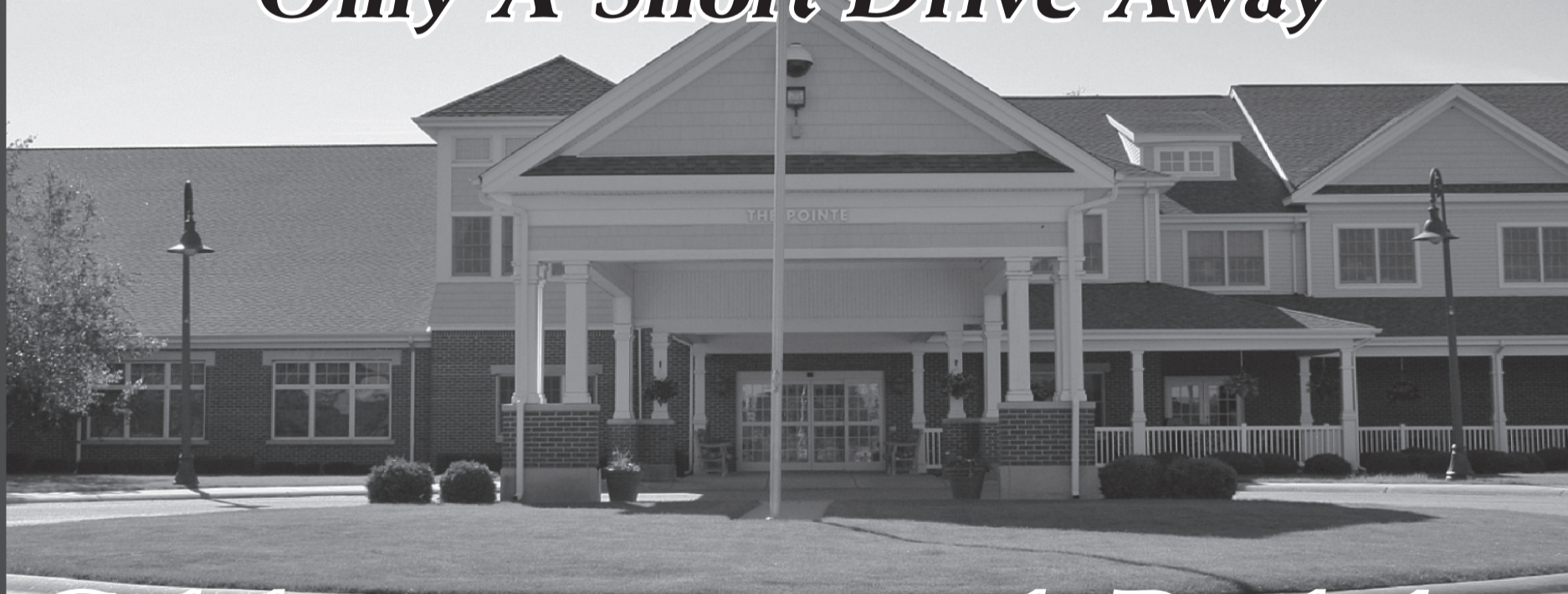
trained with Wenig.

“People do not get hurt if they are at a yoga class with a registered yoga teacher and follow the directions of only doing what their body permits,” she said. “A person needs to listen to the yoga teacher and to their body. Some people have restricted range of motion in a joint and they must not push themselves to hurt it.

“The most dangerous situation is a type A personality who tries to keep up the person next to them. Yoga is not competing with others; it is just moving your muscles and body in a range that suits your ability.”



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