

March 30, 2009

healthy living made easy

First



ALL-DAY ENERGY

Nighttime restlessness is making 98% of women tired. The 3 home remedies proven to work wonders.

YOU, BODY BEAUTIFUL

Lisa Rinna (45!) reveals her quickie fat-blasters



DIAL DOWN STRESS

SHANIA'S secret to overcoming anything

INSTANT BLISS

Feel happy now with these mood miracles

SMART CURES

- ✓ Back pain
- ✓ Private aches
- ✓ GI problems
- ✓ Allergies
- ✓ Jiggly thighs

ULTRA-METABOLISM

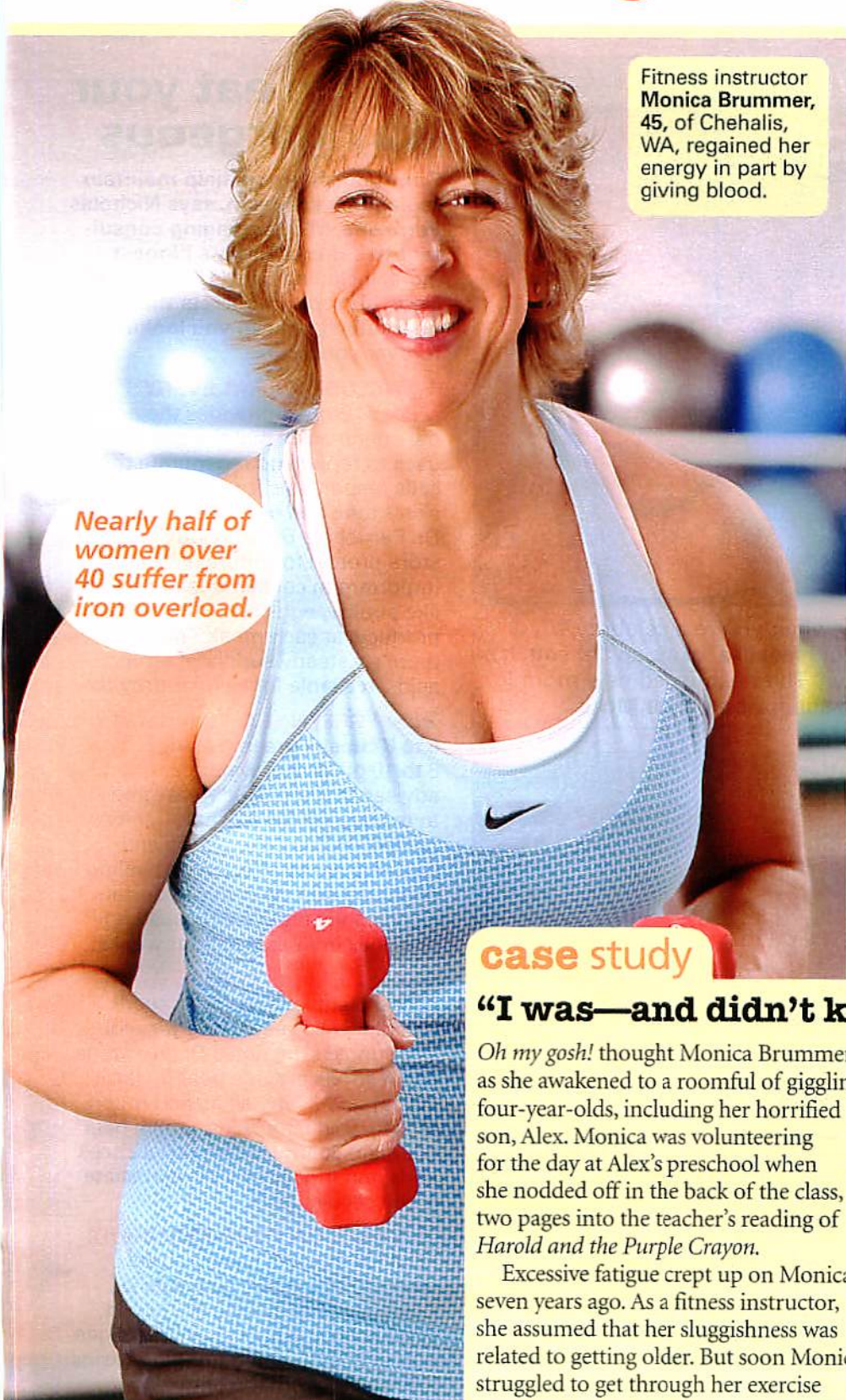
Triple fat burn to lose 31 lbs this month

3/30/09

Issue 0913



Are you getting too much of the



Fitness instructor **Monica Brummer**, 45, of Chehalis, WA, regained her energy in part by giving blood.

Nearly half of women over 40 suffer from iron overload.

case study

“I was—and didn’t know it for five years.”

Oh my gosh! thought Monica Brummer as she awakened to a roomful of giggling four-year-olds, including her horrified son, Alex. Monica was volunteering for the day at Alex’s preschool when she nodded off in the back of the class, two pages into the teacher’s reading of *Harold and the Purple Crayon*.

Excessive fatigue crept up on Monica seven years ago. As a fitness instructor, she assumed that her sluggishness was related to getting older. But soon Monica struggled to get through her exercise

Fatigue that just won’t subside, blah moods, foggy thinking... That all may seem like par for the course during a winter that’s felt a bit longer and more challenging than most. But experts have determined that for 66 percent of American women, an easily treatable condition is actually behind those troublesome symptoms.

The culprit: iron overload. This condition is generally thought to affect only 12 percent of the population since that’s the number of people who have a genetic predisposition to iron overload (*hemochromatosis*). But many more women—by one estimate, 39 percent of women over 40 and 74 percent of women over 50—have some degree of excess iron in their blood.

One reason for the increasing prevalence of iron overload: overconsumption of the synthetic *nonheme* form of iron in fortified processed foods and low-quality supplements, maintains nutrition scientist Kaayla T. Daniel, Ph.D. “This form of iron is poorly utilized by the body and more likely than the natural forms in whole foods to build up and create a harmful surplus.” Other contributing factors include menopause (since iron is

classes and even started swapping some of her time with Alex for shut-eye. She says, “When I found myself praying for the strength to push the playground swing, I knew something was wrong.”

“My healthy habits made me sicker!”

Monica also experienced a variety of puzzling symptoms, including chills, irritability, joint pain and an irregular heartbeat. Doctors addressed each of her health issues *separately* (stress, arthritis...) and told Monica that she

“tiredness mineral”?

released in menstrual flow) and the use of birth control pills.

The health-sapping effects of excess iron

When iron isn't used by the body (either because of a genetic condition or because more is consumed than the body needs), it gets stored in the brain, skin, joints, intestinal lining, ovaries, liver, pancreas and heart, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* (Avery, 2007). “Even a minor buildup can produce large amounts of free radicals that damage cells, preventing every major organ from performing at its peak and making the body feel extremely run-down.”

In addition to fatigue, pain is a significant symptom. “Iron overload can lead to headaches, joint aches, abdominal aches and chest pains,” explains Dr. Teitelbaum. Sufferers might also note difficulty concentrating and remembering details, premature aging of the skin, hair loss, lower sex drive, infertility, high blood sugar and high cholesterol.

The critical test that doctors aren't giving

The basic test to check iron levels is a *serum iron test*, which determines how much iron is in the blood. But since a variety of harmless factors (like having

was anemic due to heavy menstruation. But while Monica tried to improve her diet with high-iron foods and an iron-enhanced multivitamin, her health and mood continued to spiral downward.

Finally Monica brought her blood results to a nurse-practitioner who got it right. She suggested that Monica might be suffering from iron overload. “For five years, every time I downed a bowl of iron-fortified cereal or popped an iron supplement, I was only making myself more sluggish—and sicker!” marvels Monica, who learned that her iron overload was masquerading as anemia.

an iron-rich meal before testing) can elevate serum iron levels, doctors can easily write it off as a fluke. “As a result, women can endure a lifetime of misdiagnoses, such as arthritis or diabetes, that focus on just one or two of the symptoms,” says Dr. Teitelbaum. “And many waste lots of money on frustrating tests and useless treatments—often antidepressants—that don't target the real problem.”

The more accurate way to diagnose: a full set of iron panel tests (which includes serum iron, *serum ferritin*, *transferrin saturation* and *total iron binding capacity*) to determine if surplus iron is being stored in organs. The cost, \$200 to \$500, is generally covered by insurance.

What happens if you have iron overload

Sufferers of iron overload should stay away from the synthetic nonheme form of iron, advises Daniel. She recommends checking labels of supplements, multivitamins and fortified processed foods (particularly cereal, bread and enriched pasta) to avoid *ferrous gluconate*, *ferrous sulfate* and *ferrous fumarate*. For many women, this is all that's needed to ease symptoms in just four weeks. For women whose overload is more severe, doctors often recommend giving blood. Some women experience health improvements after doing so just five or six times.

“Now people envy my energy!”

Today, thanks to donating blood, reducing the iron in her diet and avoiding supplementation, Monica feels reborn. Not only has her energy soared, but her other symptoms have virtually disappeared. Now she is involved with iron-overload support and awareness (visit IronDisorders.org for more information) and is the wife and mom that she wants to be. Beaming, she says, “I was thrilled when, during a recent fitness class, one of my college-age students commented to me, ‘I only wish I had your energy, Monica!’”

Decade-by-decade RISK FACTORS

30s: An estimated two out of five thirtysomethings use some form of hormonal birth control (such as the Pill, the Patch or an IUD) that reduces or stops menstrual flow. With less flow, there's a greater risk of iron building up in the body, says Carolyn Dean, M.D., N.D., coauthor of *The Complete Natural Medicine Guide to Women's Health* (Robert Rose, 2005). To be safe, these women should have iron panel tests done once or twice a year to ensure they aren't storing excess iron.

40s: Almost half of women in this age group are at risk for an iron surplus. That's because many experience fewer or lighter periods, or they're on hormonal contraception to ease perimenopausal symptoms, says Dr. Dean. Besides having iron panel tests done once or twice annually, women in this age bracket should limit intake of *non-heme* iron (in fortified processed foods; see left for details) since this form is most likely to be stored, advises Kaayla T. Daniel, Ph.D.

50s+: Since menopausal women no longer menstruate, 74 percent suffer from iron overload. It's crucial that women of this age stop intake of all supplemental iron unless advised otherwise by a doctor, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D. Two to four daily servings of whole foods like beans, shrimp, salmon and beef will deliver the 8 mg of iron that's recommended for this age group. (This also applies to women who have had a hysterectomy.)