Researchers (the aforementioned smarties) have long known that laughter helps you cope with everyday stresses and major illnesses. But now they say there are even more health benefits related to chuckling, guffawing, and tee-heeing (looks like somebody found the thesaurus...fancy). Not to get all technical but here are just some of the benefits of laughter.

• **Balancing your immune system.** Laughter reduces levels of certain not-so-good hormones related to stress, anger and hostility. These hormones can suppress your immune system (which is kind of important), increase the number of blood platelets (which can cause obstructions in your arteries) and raise your blood pressure (which is usually not a good thing). When you laugh, your body creates cells that kill tumors and viruses. Your body also creates things called interferon gamma and T cells, which are important to your immune system, and B cells, which make disease-destroying antibodies.

• **Clearing out the cobwebs.** Laughter may lead to hiccuping and coughing, which clears the respiratory tract by dislodging mucous plugs (gross). Laughter also increases the concentration of salivary immunoglobulin A (try saying that fast), which defends against infectious organisms entering through the respiratory tract.

• **Working out without really working out.** Did you know laughing 100 times is equal to 10 minutes on the rowing machine or 15 minutes on an exercise bike? Laughter gives your diaphragm and abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg and back muscles a workout. No sweat band required.

• **Letting off some steam.** Laughter provides a way for you to harmlessly release negative emotions, such as anger, sadness and fear — this is especially helpful for people who have a hard time expressing their feelings. Laughter is cathartic and does a lot more than just making you feel good.

What makes you laugh? Is it a particular TV show or movie? How about cat videos on the internet? Or kids and the darndest things they say? Whatever it is that makes you laugh, smart people recommend you seek it out as much as possible.

So, what should you do with this information? Figure out what makes you laugh and do it more often. Also, try to make others laugh by telling them funny stories and silly jokes. Here are a couple to get you started:

**What happens to a frog’s car when it breaks down?**

It gets toad away.

**What is Beethoven’s favorite fruit?**

Ba-na-na-na! (Pretend you are playing the piano for added effect...and to look really cool.)