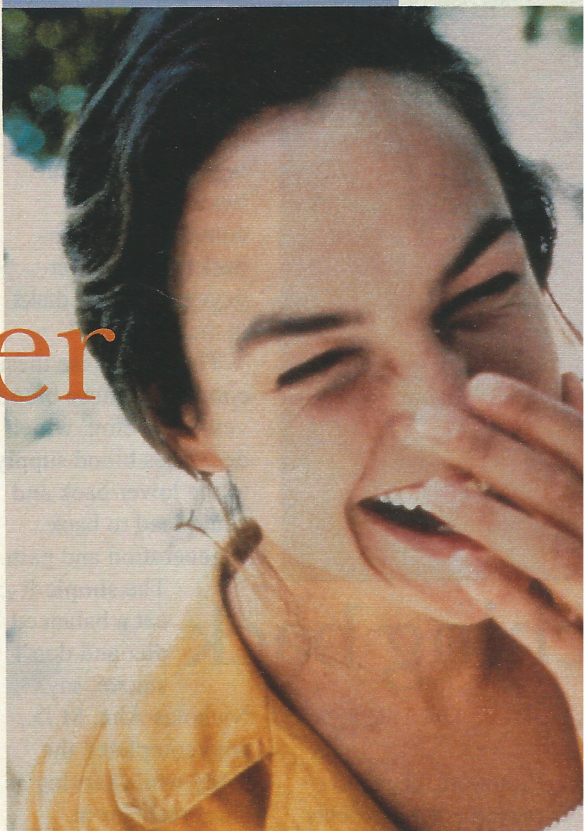


# Long live laughter

Looking for good health? Join the club. A laughter club, that is

For boosting your immune system to reducing stress and the risk of heart disease, laughter really is the best medicine. "Laughter lowers levels of stress hormones, and therefore may prevent hardening of the arteries and heart attacks," says Michael Miller, M.D., director of the Center for Preventive Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center, in Baltimore. Laughter has also been shown to lower rates of allergies and infections, and to help with digestion and sleep.

For these reasons, more and more people are joining one of 80 laughter clubs that have formed in the last two years. Members, typically professionals and stay-at-home moms in their 30s and 40s, meet in community centers, offices and clinics to make one another giggle. "One of the fundamentals of the clubs is silliness," says Steve Wilson, who organized the first meeting of the World USA Laughter Tour, in Ohio, in 1999, for the purpose of "preventing illness and the hardening of attitudes." They never tell jokes because not everyone may get them or like them. They never



A daily dose of laughter can prevent disease

ridicule or embarrass. "We just let ourselves be silly," he says. The groups merrily perform exercises in which they pretend to be penguins or babies. "It's fun in the name of health," says Wilson.

This same brand of silliness helps patients at a community cancer center in LaPorte, Indiana, where cancer-research nurse Roxanne Karnes eases patients' pain with humor. "It improves the quality of life for patients, their families and the medical professionals who help

them," says a group certified in her laughter. "I have lower blood pressure, fewer complaints about my health," she says.

But you don't have to reap the benefits of laughter about laughing and slow down, which can help

## LIGHTEN UP!

### Tips to add laughs to your life

- Rent a few laugh-out-loud classics: *Some Like It Hot*, *Bringing Up Baby* and *Father of the Bride*.
- Call that friend or relative who makes you chuckle.
- Recall an amusing incident or joke.
- Join a laughter club. For more information on the North American Laughter Clubs, call 800-669-5233 or check out [www.worldlaughter.com](http://www.worldlaughter.com). —C.O.