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Republican

June 29, 2022



Health, *Mind &* BODY



Seven lifestyle choices to reduce cancer risk



To date there is no definitive cure for cancer, nor any one preventative treatment. But individuals should not resign themselves to the fact that cancer is inevitable. There are plenty of lifestyle modifications that can go a long way toward reducing cancer risk. Here's a deeper look at some of the more effective.

Avoid tobacco


Not only does smoking cause between 80 and 90 percent of lung cancer deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it also contributes to many other forms of the disease, including cancers of the pancreas, liver, bladder, and cervix. Quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke can reduce cancer risk.

Exercise regularly

Physical activity can lower estrogen levels, reduce levels of insulin in the blood, help a person lose weight, and reduce inflammation — all factors that

See **Cancer risk**, Page 3B

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Vaccines are especially important for older adults. As you get older, your immune system weakens, and it can be more difficult to fight off infections. You're more likely to get diseases like the flu, pneumonia, and shingles — and to have complications. If you have an ongoing health condition — like diabetes or heart disease — getting vaccinated is especially important.

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Myths and facts about immunizations

Vaccine skepticism has existed for as long as vaccines have been available. However, many people might not have realized the scope of that skepticism until the last two years, when the world confronted a global pandemic. Though vaccinations against COVID-19 were available less than a year after the World Health Organization first declared a pandemic in March 2020, millions of people refused to be immunized. The lukewarm reaction to the approval of the COVID-19 vaccines is a reflection of the skepticism many people still have about vaccines. Debunking some common myths about immunizations may help people rest easier as millions wonder if getting vaccinated is their best move.

Myth: Vaccines are not safe.

Facts: The WHO notes that the licensing of a vaccine requires exhaustive evaluation and testing. That evaluation and testing is conducted to determine not just the efficacy of a vaccine, but also the safety of it. Any side effects that appear during the prequalification and licensing phase of vaccine development are thoroughly investigated.

Myth: It is better to be immunized through disease than vaccines:

Facts: This was a popular outlook among people who did not choose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, but the facts do not support it. The WHO notes that the immune response to vaccines is similar to the one produced by natural infection. In addition, WHO warns that the price paid for immunity through natural infection can be significant. Mental retardation, birth defects from congenital rubella infection,

liver cancer from the hepatitis B virus, or death from measles are some noted potential consequences of natural infection.

Myth: Vaccines cause autism.

Facts: Autism Speaks, an organization devoted to supporting and advocating for individuals with autism and their families, notes that extensive research has been conducted over several decades and concluded that there is no link between childhood vaccinations and autism. In fact, the WHO notes that the author of a 1998 study that raised concerns about a possible link between the MMR vaccine and autism was found guilty of serious professional misconduct by the General Medical Council in 2010 and has since been barred from practicing medicine in the United Kingdom.

Myth: Vaccines contain mercury, which is dangerous.

Facts: The WHO reports that very few vaccines contain thiomersal, an organic, ethylmercury-containing compound. Vaccines that contain thiomersal have only a small amount of it, and the WHO notes that no evidence exists to suggest that the amount of thiomersal found in vaccines poses a health risk.

Myth: Vaccine-preventable childhood illnesses are a fact of life.

Facts: Vaccine-preventable diseases are preventable. Such diseases can lead to serious complications in children and adults who are not vaccinated. Complications can include pneumonia, encephalitis, blindness, diarrhea, ear infections, congenital rubella syndrome, and even death.

Cancer risk • from page 2B

contribute to the formation of cancer. Experts recommend 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise a week.

Eat healthy foods

The American Institute for Cancer Research indicates certain minerals, vitamins and phytochemicals can produce anti-cancer effects. Many foods, namely fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, can boost health and contribute to lower cancer risk.

Avoid excessive alcohol consumption

Drinking alcohol regularly increases the risk of cancers to the mouth, voice box and throat, according to the CDC. Furthermore, alcohol consumption is a primary risk factor for liver cancer. By limiting alcohol consumption, individuals can reduce their cancer risk.

Be cautious of hepatitis C

Individuals should avoid behaviors that put them at risk of contracting hepatitis C, which causes inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis C can be contracted by receiving a piercing or tattoo in an unsanitary environment, through injecting or inhaling

illicit drugs, through unsafe sex, or if you are a healthcare worker exposed to infected blood through an accidental needle prick.

Apply sunscreen

Protect the skin from exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun and tanning beds, as skin cancer is the most common form of the disease in the United States. Simply reducing exposure can help prevent skin cancers and other damage. This includes wearing wide-brimmed hats, applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, avoiding the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and wearing sun-protective clothing. Tanning beds are not safer for the skin than being out in the sun, so they should be avoided.

Get enough sleep

The importance of sleep to overall health is easily overlooked. Lancaster General Health says, while there is no specific data for sleep on cancer prevention, sleep deprivation can lead to harmful behaviors, such as overeating, drinking too much alcohol or being too tired to exercise, each of which increases cancer risk.

Relatively easy lifestyle changes can go a long way toward reducing cancer risk.

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What the nutrients found in many fruits, vegetables do for your body

A nutritious diet can serve as a strong foundation for a long, healthy life. Fruits and vegetables are the building blocks of nutritious diets, as they're loaded with nutrients that serve the body in myriad ways.

- **Calcium:** Dark, leafy vegetables like kale, spinach, broccoli, and bok choy contain calcium. Calcium also is found in fruits, including papaya and orange. According to the National Institutes of Health, the body utilizes calcium to build and maintain strong bones. In fact, the NIH notes that almost all calcium in the body is stored in the bones and teeth, where this vital mineral provides structure and hardness. Calcium also helps nerves carry messages from the brain to every part of the body.

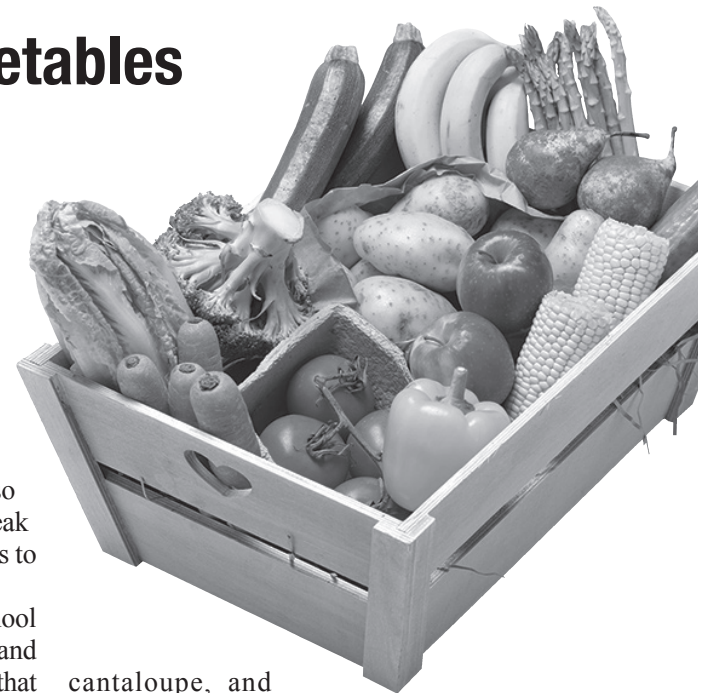
- **Dietary fiber:** Dietary fiber is found in various fruits and vegetables. The Cleveland Clinic notes that berries like raspberries and blackberries contain significant amounts of dietary fiber. Pears, artichoke hearts and Brussels sprouts are packed with fiber as well. A high-fiber diet helps stabilize bowel movements and maintain bowel health, and WebMD notes that studies have found a link between high-fiber diets and a lower risk for colorectal cancer. Studies also have linked fiber-rich foods with heart-friendly outcomes like reduced inflammation and lower cholesterol.

- **Magnesium:** The Mayo Clinic reports that magnesium

supports muscle and nerve function and energy production. Individuals with chronically low levels of magnesium could be at increased risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis. The NIH notes that magnesium is widely distributed in plants. That means it can be found in a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, including spinach, edamame, black beans, bananas, and broccoli. Magnesium levels vary significantly in these foods, so anyone concerned about magnesium deficiency can speak with their physicians about the best and healthiest ways to include more in their diets.

- **Vitamin A:** According to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, vitamin A stimulates the production and activity of white blood cells, helps maintain healthy cells that line the body's interior surfaces and regulates cell growth and division necessary for reproduction. Green, leafy vegetables are good sources of vitamin A, as are orange and yellow vegetables like carrots and squash. Vitamin A also can be found in cantaloupe, apricots and mangos.

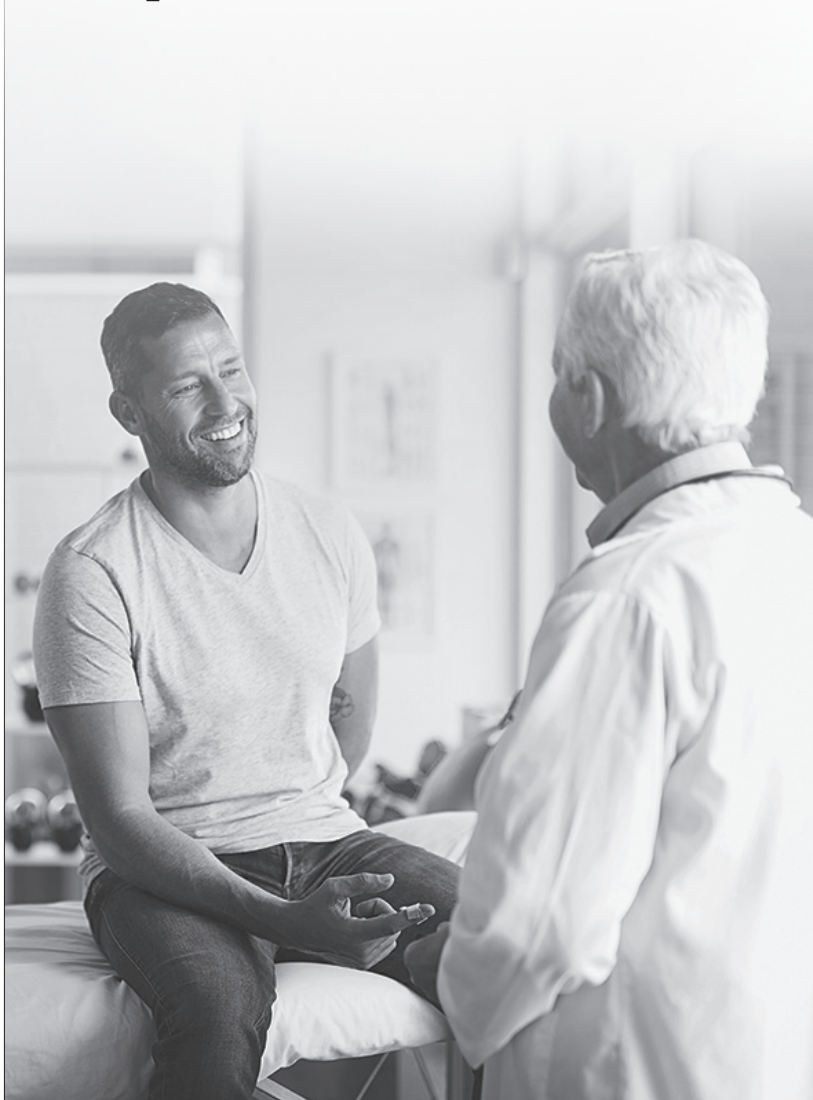
- **Potassium:** The Dietary Guidelines for Americans established by the United States Department of Agriculture list beat greens, lima beans, swiss chard, baked potatoes (with skin), and yams as great sources of potassium. Kiwi, melon,



cantaloupe, and bananas are additional sources of potassium. The T.H. Chan School of Public Health reports that the main role of potassium in the body is to help maintain normal levels of fluid inside the cells. Potassium also supports a normal blood pressure.

The nutrients found in various fruits and vegetables go a long way toward building stronger, healthier bodies.

Important reasons to visit a primary care physician



It is vital to make personal health a priority. Despite that widely accepted truth, far too often people delay trips to see their doctors. The coronavirus pandemic only compounded this issue. An April 2020 report from Modern Healthcare found roughly one in three Americans delayed medical care as they coped with the financial loss and stress caused by COVID-19. A report from CTV indicated Canadian cancer diagnoses were down 16 percent from 2018 to 2020 due to closed facilities or fear of getting COVID-19 from medical offices.

Concerns about the pandemic are not the only reasons individuals may skip doctor visits. Some avoid going to the doctor due to fear of the unknown. Dr. Barbara Cox, a psychologist based in San Diego, told NBC News that it's common to feel reticent and anxious about going to the doctor. Around 3 percent of the population actually suffers from iatrophobia, the medical name for fear of doctors. Most just worry about getting bad news.

A refresher course on the benefits of visiting a primary care doctor may compel millions to schedule appointments and get back on top of their overall health.

- **Chronic disease management:** An individual with a chronic disease, such as kidney disease, diabetes or hypertension, should consult with a doctor about the ideal frequency of visits and to coordinate medication and testing with specialists.

- **Vaccines and shots:** Primary care providers (PCPs) offer routine vaccinations and can ensure that individuals are up-to-date on the immunizations they need to stay safe. Tetanus, diphtheria, shingles, pertussis, flu, and now COVID-19 vaccines are vital

to overall health.

- **Medical referrals:** A PCP can assess a health situation and refer a patient to the correct specialist if more extensive care is needed. However, many chronic conditions can be monitored and addressed by a PCP.

- **Cancer screenings:** UW Medicine, which specializes in patient care, research and physician training in Seattle, says most people will need a few cancer screenings as they age, including colonoscopies, Pap smears, mammograms, and other important diagnostic tests for cancer. PCPs are usually the first line of defense against cancer and can ensure patients receive the screenings they need.

- **Non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries:** Unless a situation is life-threatening or severe, thereby warranting a trip to the emergency room, most people can visit their PCPs for help treating a variety of conditions. When in doubt, individuals should first consult with their general practitioners about the right course of treatment.

- **Routine lab work:** Blood and urine tests often are part of annual well visit checks. Many PCP offices have phlebotomists on staff so that lab work can be conducted in the convenience of one place and then sent out for testing.

- **Work or sports physicals:** Certain employers require physical examinations, as do schools and recreational sports leagues. PCP offices are the place to go for these types of examinations, which are generally recommended annually.

Primary care physicians are often the first people to turn to for a bevy of health and wellness needs.

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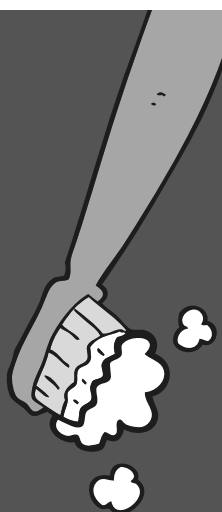
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Enjoying summertime sun, safely

For the last few years, summertime has felt even more special to me than usual. With the long, warm days, we're finally able to get outside more and enjoy walks, bike rides and time at the park — often with family and friends we may not have seen for a while.

In our excitement to enjoy everything summer has to offer, it's important that we don't forget to protect our skin when we're

out in the sun. The sun's ultraviolet — or UV — rays can damage skin, increasing the risk of skin cancer, including the most serious type of skin cancer, melanoma.

"There are increasing rates of skin cancer on the whole," said Dr. Lynn Cornelius, chief of dermatology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. "Some of this may be due to aging populations, and some due to people not photo-protecting as well as they should."

Key steps we can take to protect our



by Dr. Graham Colditz
Siteman Cancer Center

skin from the sun include: using sunscreen (and re-applying), finding shade between 10AM and 4PM and wearing sunglasses, hats and long sleeve shirts.

For sunscreens, a 30 SPF (sun protection factor) or higher rating is good for shorter periods outside. For longer outings, a 50 SPF or higher is better. Choose either a chemical sunscreen, which absorbs UV rays, or a mineral sunscreen, such

as zinc, which blocks UV rays. Despite some news reports that pop up occasionally, both types are safe for children and adults. So, pick whichever type you and your family prefer.

"Try different formulations; there are a lot of them out there," Cornelius said. "The most important sunscreen is the one that you'll use."

For clothes, those made of fabrics that block the sun can be an especially good choice. Similar to the SPF ratings of sunscreens, sun protective clothes often come

with a specific UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) rating. The higher the number, the better the protection.

"There's great clothing out there now," Cornelius said. "They're not heavy. They're not expensive, and you can get them just about anywhere. We tell a lot of folks to wear those — particularly at the beach — or for little kids."

Cornelius offered these additional tips for staying safe in the sun:

- Protect your skin whatever your skin tone. People of color with darker skin have some natural protection, but darker skin can still burn, and it can still develop skin cancer.

- Reapply sunscreen every couple of hours, or after sweating or going in the water. It's important but something people often forget to do.

- Rub in spray-on sunscreens. It's easy to miss spots otherwise.

- Keep a small container of sunscreen with you, so you always have it when you need it. Sunscreen sticks fit great in pockets and work well when you're hot and sweaty.

- Use sunscreen even if your makeup has UV protection. Most makeup has a lower

SPF.

- Don't forget to protect your ears, including the tops. It's a common spot for skin cancers, particularly in men.

- Don't forget to protect your scalp if your hair is thinning. Spray-on sunscreens can be good for this.

- If you work outside, try to take particular care to protect yourself from the sun. Options may be limited, but whatever steps you take can help.

Enjoying the outdoors is one of the best parts of summertime. And with just a few relatively simple steps, we can help protect ourselves and our family from the sun's rays. And that can make an already good time feel even better.

If your health — and your family's health. Take control.

Dr. Graham A. Colditz, associate director of prevention and control at Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, is an internationally recognized leader in cancer prevention and the creator of the free prevention tool YourDiseaseRisk.com. The Phelps Health Delbert Day Cancer Institute is part of the Siteman Cancer Network.



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Benefits of blueberries

Small, yet bursting with big flavor, blueberries are a favorite of so many people. While blueberries may be coveted for their appeal in recipes that run the gamut from breakfast foods to desserts, the nutrients within them provide many benefits as well. After all, blueberries are not called “superfoods” for nothing.

Here’s a deeper look at some of the health benefits of blueberries.

1. Blueberries are a low-calorie food. Healthline notes that blueberries contain only 84 calories per cup. Plus they are 85 percent water. Blueberries can be a filling snack that doesn’t compromise low-calorie diets.

2. Blueberries may improve exercise recovery rates. Research published in the Iranian Journal of Public Health in 2018 has shown that eating blueberries can increase muscle strength recovery. That means that blueberries may help thwart a condition called exercise-induced muscle damage, which results in soreness, reduced muscle strength and impaired athletic performance.

3. Blueberries help fight urinary tract infections. Cranberries are often touted as the go-to for treating and preventing UTIs. According to a 1998 study published in The New England Journal of Medicine, specific compounds found in blueberries known as proanthocyanidins can prevent bacteria from sticking to the walls of the urinary tract. Furthermore, the high amounts of vitamin C in blueberries also can inhibit the growth of bacteria that cause UTIs.

4. Blueberries may thwart cancer. Phytochemicals in blueberries decrease the risk of several cancers by protecting cells from chronic inflammation, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research. In addition, the fiber in blueberries helps protect the intestinal lining from colorectal cancer.

5. Blueberries help build stronger bones. Blueberries are rich in phosphorus, zinc, magnesium, calcium, iron, and vitamin K. These nutrients, together with strength-training exercise, can contribute to bone health.

6. Blueberries lower bad cholesterol. The fiber in blueberries may help dissolve LDL cholesterol, also known as “bad” cholesterol, in the bloodstream. A study in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics determined daily consumption of blueberries helped to improve blood pressure and arterial stiffness in postmenopausal women.

7. Blueberries improve immune function. The blue in blueberries comes from anthocyanin, an antioxidant that increases immune function. The Mayo Clinic also says research indicates compounds in blueberries may delay the effects of vascular dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.

8. Blueberries may be an anti-aging treatment. Oxidative DNA damage occurs in every cell in the body each day, according to Healthline. DNA damage is one reason why people grow older. High antioxidants in blueberries can neutralize some free radicals that are implicated in DNA damage.

Blueberries get their superfood status from the number of health benefits they offer.

“The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings.” — Eric Hoffer

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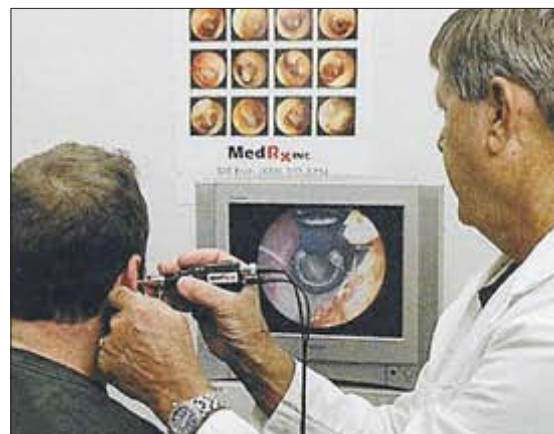
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What to know about prostate cancer screening

Prostate cancer is an illness that develops in the prostate gland, which is found only in males. Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the second most common type of cancer among American and Canadian men. It also is the second-leading cause of cancer death among men after lung cancer in the United States and the third-leading among men in Canada.

Men of any age are susceptible to prostate cancer, but it tends to be more prevalent in men age 50 and older and those who have had a brother or another close relative with the disease. As with most types of cancer, early diagnosis can mean getting on the road to treatment faster, potentially improving the outcome of recovery. One of the ways to catch cancer early is through screening.

Prostate cancer screening recommendations

The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, which is an organization made up of disease experts and doctors who study research and make recommendations on the best ways to prevent diseases or find them early, offer their guidelines regarding prostate cancer screening. USPSTF says the following:

- Men who are aged 55 to 69 should make individual decisions about being screened for prostate cancer with a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test.
- Before making a decision, individuals

should consult with doctors about the pros and cons of prostate cancer screening.

- Men who are 70 years old and older should not be screened for prostate cancer routinely.

Most prostate cancers grow slowly or not at all, and the USPSTF says the goal of prostate cancer screening is to find cancers that may be at high risk for spreading if untreated, and to find them early before they spread.

What is a PSA test?

A PSA test measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen in a man's blood. PSA is a protein produced by both noncancerous and cancerous tissue in the prostate gland, states the Mayo Clinic. While small amounts of PSA are normally found in the blood, higher levels of PSA may indicate the presence of prostate cancer.

It's important to note that a high PSA score is not indicative of cancer. It is only one factor to consider regarding prostate cancer risk. The presence of an enlarged prostate or the presence of lumps or hard areas in conjunction with a PSA may lead to further testing.

However, digital prostate exams, wherein a doctor inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into the rectum to feel the prostate, are not always preferred by patients, who may only opt for PSA testing for screening.



Benefits and detriments to screening

The key benefit of undergoing prostate cancer screening is to find prostate cancers that may be at high risk of spreading so they can be treated and contained, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

One possible consequence of prostate cancer screening is the risk of false positive test results. False positive results may lead to further testing, including a biopsy of the prostate. Older men are more likely to have false positive results, according to the CDC.

The Massachusetts Department of Public

Health also says prostate cancer screening can lead to stress and overtreatment — with some men getting operations or radiation with side effects that might not have been necessary since prostate cancer is often very slow-growing and doesn't warrant treatment. The MDPH also says complications from prostate cancer treatments can include blood clots during surgery, impotence, urinary incontinence, and fecal incontinence.

Men must make their own decisions regarding prostate cancer screening. A discussion of the risks and benefits with a doctor can help men make informed decisions.

Reap the many health benefits of a good laugh

Most people have heard the adage that "laughter is the best medicine." There are many indications that laughter can be beneficial to the mind and body, and that the perks of laughter and humor are far-reaching.

Various professionals have studied the clinical benefits of laughter, including Dr. Lee Berk and Dr. Stanley Tan at Loma Linda University in California. Here is what these experts say in regard to the benefits of a few good belly laughs.

Boosts immune system

A 2016 study titled "The Laughter Prescription" and published in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine found that the amount of laughter a person experiences is related to the immune system's ability to fight off infections, among other benefits. The study references additional research that indicated spontaneous (not forced) laughter boosts the immune system by increasing natural killer (NK) cell activity. Levels were measured after participants watched a one-hour humorous video. NK cells are lymphocytes with a unique ability to kill a broad spectrum of cancerous

and virus-infected cells, according to the National Institutes of Health. Laughing out loud improves immune system function and increases heart rate and oxygen levels.

Lowers blood pressure

Individuals who laugh often have lower blood pressure than those who laugh less often. Lower blood pressure reduces the risk for stroke and heart attack.

Helps heal the brain

Laughing can help reverse symptoms of grief or depression by increasing the pleasure-enhancing neurochemicals in the brain, according to the Dr. Sears Wellness Institute. A good laugh also may help people recovering from chronic illnesses by helping to alleviate fear and anxiety that could otherwise preoccupy the mind.

Suppresses stress hormones

Drs. Berk and Tan found that the stress hormones epinephrine and cortisol decrease following laughter. Laughter may help people feel less stressed and overwhelmed.



Provides a small body workout

Hearty laughter can exercise the diaphragm, contract the abdominals and even work the shoulders and muscles in the face. Laughter also gets the heart pumping at a rate that burns a similar amount of calories per hour as walking slowly.

Provides natural pain relief

Research suggests that laughter decreases inflammation that may contribute to pain. Researchers at the University of Maryland found that laughing also increases blood flow, which may help to reduce pain as well.

Finding ways to laugh more is an easy and fun way to improve overall health.

Strategies to prevent back pain



Men and women are well aware that minor aches and pains are part of aging. A balky knee that acts up on rainy days or an old sports injury that still triggers periodic discomfort may not be much to worry about, but a more serious condition such as chronic back pain can be so debilitating that it's wise for individuals to do whatever they can to avoid it or delay its arrival.

Millions of cases of chronic back pain undoubtedly go unreported. That's because many individuals accept back pain as a side effect of aging, while others lack access to health care, making it difficult to pinpoint just how prevalent chronic back pain is. However, the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 estimated that around 577 million people across the globe experience lower back pain, or LBP.

That prevalence should not give the impression that chronic back pain is unavoidable. In fact, various strategies can be employed to prevent back pain and all the negative consequences that come with it.

- **Be active.** The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion notes that physical activity strengthens the back and lowers the risk for developing back pain. The ODPHP recommends individuals engage in back-strengthening and stretching exercises at least two days per week. Chiropractors or personal trainers can recommend safe back-strengthening exercises, which the Mayo Clinic notes include the bridge exercise and shoulder blade squeeze. Stretches individuals can try include the knee-to-chest stretch, the lower back rotational stretch and the cat stretch.

- **Embrace new exercise routines.** Individuals accustomed

to strength training that involves dumbbells and circuit training machines should know that there are other ways to build strength and benefit the back at the same time. For example, studies have shown the value of Pilates in increasing the strength of core muscles, including those in the lower back. In addition, the ODPHP recommends yoga to individuals who want to make their backs stronger and lower their risk for back pain. Many fitness facilities have long since recognized the value of yoga and pilates and now include each approach in their class schedules.

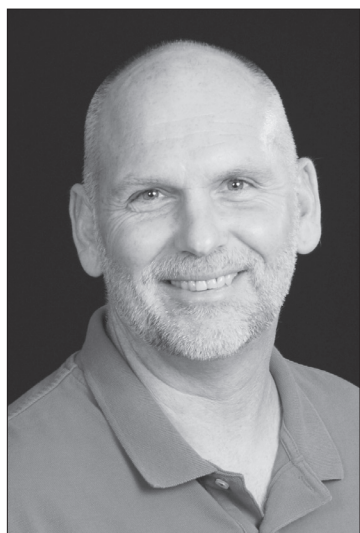
- **Perfect your posture.** Another way to prevent back pain is to make a concerted effort to maintain good posture. The ODPHP urges individuals to avoid slouching when standing and sitting and to stand tall with head up and shoulders back. When sitting, sit with back straight against the back of the chair and feet flat on the floor. If possible, keep knees slightly higher than hips when sitting. Alternate between sitting and standing to avoid being in the same position for too long.

- **Lift correctly.** Poor technique when lifting things, even items that are not excessively heavy, can contribute to back pain. When lifting items, do so with the legs and not the back. The ODPHP urges individuals to keep their backs straight and bend at the knees or hips when lifting items. Avoid lifting especially heavy items without assistance.

Despite its prevalence, back pain is not a given. Individuals can keep various strategies in mind to avoid joining the hundreds of millions of people across the globe who suffer from back pain every day.

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Autism: Communicating beyond “the spectrum”



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Speech therapy, Speech Language Pathologist Pediatric therapy

Autism is becoming more prevalent in media and other outlets today. There are many diagnostic criteria, however, one of the first and earliest signs of autism is communicating differently.

For a child, this can include:

- using an adult’s hand as a tool;
- not speaking, instead gesturing;
- using scripted language such as emotionally charged phrases from TV shows, movies or daily conversation.

Diagnosing autism has greatly improved over the years and with that, health care professionals are able to learn more about experiences autistic people have. Knowing more about their experiences helps determine the best therapy techniques and treatments to improve their communication.

One area which has had a lot of positive feedback is augmentative-alternative communication (AAC) devices. These devices can be used if an individual is non-speaking, or if the person does speak occasionally, but has difficulty speaking in certain situations, such as stressful times. They often look like tablets with a variety of words on them. They can help with many things such as vocabulary growth, forming sentences, and even reading and writing instruction. We have learned that individuals with autism have increased visual abilities that allow them to better process information when seen, compared to just hearing it. This ability to “see” the language in grid form on a communication device can be extremely helpful.

Communication is a basic human right, and we want everyone to have access to as many communication methods as possible.

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