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Health & *Wellness* DIRECTORY



Could your house be making you sick?

Tips for maintaining good air quality

By Karen Stokes
Special to The Freeman

When thinking about air pollution, most thoughts are of the ozone, car emissions, chemicals from factories or smog but pollution can exist right in your own home.

Russell Harland, MD, a ProHealth Medical Group specialist in critical care medicine and pulmonary disease, said indoor air pollutants can cause discomfort as well as long-term health issues.

"People with and without underlying health conditions can experience coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes, sore throat, fatigue, headache, congestion, dizziness, and even upper respiratory infections from prolonged exposure to poor air quality," Harland said.

"People who have health conditions such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema or COPD commonly experience runny noses, congestion, wheezing, coughing and bronchospasms, in-home irritants



Submitted photo

Russell Harland, MD, a ProHealth Medical Group specialist in critical care medicine and pulmonary disease, said indoor air pollutants can cause discomfort as well as long-term health issues.

can worsen their health issues and make daily life miserable." Even products used for house cleaning can contain chemicals that can make those products hazardous to your health.

"Any agent that produces a

fragrance or odor can act as a respiratory irritant," Harland said.

"This includes cleaning and washing products; fragrances from candles, diffusers and sprays; pet dander and even flowers. Mold can also cause allergic reactions."

Cindy Wehrman, COPD program coordinator for ProHealth Care, said the American Lung Association has recipes for making household cleaning solutions that are low in irritants.

"I teach ProHealth COPD patients all kinds of ways to reduce their risks of becoming ill and needing treatment or hospitalization," said Wehrman. "For example, when using household cleaners and sprays, avoid running the exhaust fan and keep the nose and mouth covered while spraying or applying cleaning agents. Leave the room for a few minutes while the cleaning agent settles."

The amount of pollutants in homes will vary so to esti-

mate the amount of pollutants, it's best to purchase an indoor air quality monitor.

Devices to monitor radon, carbon monoxide and CO2 can be found at most hardware and home improvement stores. Contractors can assess other allergens and respiratory irritants. It's important to research and select a reputable contractor or home inspector to carry out a home assessment.

If a significant problem is found in the home, a plumbing, heating and cooling, mold or ventilation expert can help make recommendations for any changes or modifications needed.

"Anything you can do to improve indoor air quality helps reduce inflammation and enhance well-being. The health benefits include fewer and less severe illnesses, less inflammation in the body, better sleep and greater overall comfort," Harland said.

See **AIR**, PAGE 5



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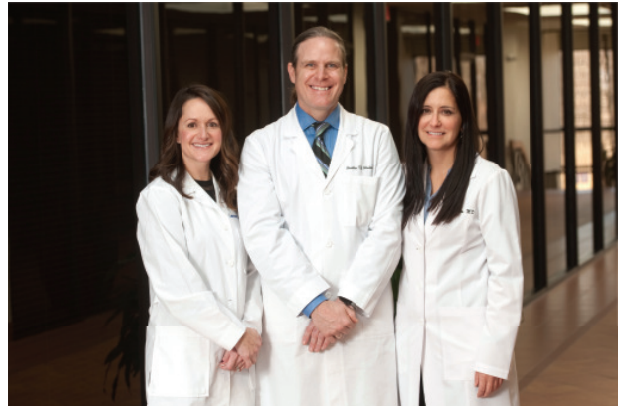
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Don't let shoulder and back pain disrupt your life

Simple treatments and life changes can improve condition

By Jody L. Mayers
Special to The Freeman

Have you ever heard the word *adulting*? Well, if not, it basically encompasses all the mandatory parts of being an adult that are not fun such as paying bills, going grocery shopping, cleaning the house, laundry, you get the idea. For most Americans, *adulting* can also mean, aches and pains, especially in the shoulders and back.

Back pain is so frequent, that it is the number one cause of work-related absence and/or disability in the U.S.; and according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 80% of adults experience low back pain at some time in their lives. Drs. Brad and Vanessa Fritz are a husband and wife team that practice at Chiropractic Company in Oconomowoc, Vanessa Fritz said it's the most frequent reasons why patients seek their care.

"When a patient comes into



Submitted photo

Drs. Brad and Vanessa Fritz are a husband-and-wife team that practice at Chiropractic Company in Oconomowoc.

our office, our duty is to assess the source of the low back pain so we know how to properly

treat the condition and have the best chance at getting great results," said Fritz.

Posture and biomechanics during daily activities are chief contributing factors; this can mean the way you sit at your desk, how you lift objects, the way you sleep, or even the way your body moves during repetitive motions, Fritz explained.

"We try to help you target these activities that may be preventing your body from healing. Assessing a patient for old and new injuries, as well as genetic conditions, are also important contributing factors to rule in or out," she said.

Dr. Jeffery Hamill, a chiropractor from Kettle Moraine Health Center, said when someone often experiences pain their first instinct is to run to their primary doctor and seek pain medications but he explained that there are multiple ways to approach an injury when it comes to treatment — adjustment, physical therapy such as heat or ice, orthopedic supports, and certain exercises.

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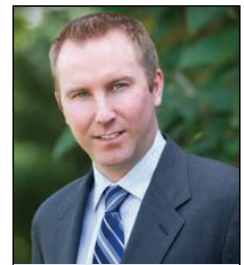
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Dr. Jeffery Hamill, a chiropractor from Kettle Moraine Health Center, explained there are multiple ways to approach an injury when it comes to treatment — adjustment, physical therapy such as heat or ice, orthopedic supports, and certain exercises.

practor that we are going to further injure the area or that the results are going to be immediate,” he said. “We are trained to gently help people but it usually takes a handful of visits to see results. You can’t go to the gym and expect to see results overnight and the same is true for chiropractic care.”

Fritz said, unfortunately, exercises are not a one size fits all activity; an individual should be evaluated to determine where they have deficits in their strength and range of motion.

“Targeted recommendations can be given to make sure you’re not putting yourself at risk for injury, and make sure you’re being efficient with your time,” she said. “A professional can objectively evaluate what deactivated or weakened regions need to be strengthened and to stretch those that are overworked.”

Fritz explained that in general, simple range of motion exercises, walking, swimming, gentle yoga are activities that most people can tolerate and gets the body moving and the heart elevated.

“Weight-bearing exercise is important, however, for maintaining bone health and strength so it’s important not to neglect this type of exercise entirely,” she said.

Fritz also explained that foods can greatly come into play when it comes to pain, inflammatory or anti-inflammatory.

“The foods we eat are either feeding or fighting inflamma-

tion,” she said. “Generally speaking, sugar, dairy, processed food, and most grains are pro-inflammatory and should be eaten in moderation or eliminated.”

Fritz explained that a multivitamin can help fill the gaps, and an omega (fish oil) supplement and anti-inflammatory boosters like turmeric and boswellia are a few easy additions to help give your body what it needs to function optimally.

“With both food and supplements, it’s important to take into consideration the sources and to always try and get the best quality whenever possible,” she said.

If injured, Hamill said people shouldn’t be afraid to use ice to bring down the swelling and inflammation.

“It’s the simplest and best way to aide in the healing process,” he said.



Air From Page 2

Renters and homeowners can do several things to improve indoor air quality.

Tips include:

- A zero use approach to tobacco, vaping products and cannabis.
- Dusting and vacuuming to minimize dust and pet dander.
- Cleaning bed linens, throws, blankets and curtains regularly.
- Keeping pets cleaned and groomed, with brushing taking place away from common living areas.
- Keeping windows closed at times of high pollen and outdoor mold counts.

- Maintaining 40 to 50 percent relative humidity in the home.

- Placing room air purifiers in spaces that could benefit from air filtering and circulation.

- Changing furnace filters as recommended by the manufacturer.

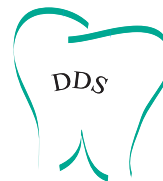
- Regularly maintaining heating and ventilation systems.

- Cleaning throw rugs semi-weekly. Professionally cleaning large area rugs and carpets at least once a year.

Adopting regular practices that keep your home free and clean of pollutants and irritants will help improve your quality of life.

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Tips to jump-start your immune system

Eating healthy and sunlight help boost health

By Jody L. Mayers
Special to The Freeman

What travels about half the length of a telephone pole up to 80 kilometers? If you're thinking of a cheetah, bird, hare or another animal you are wrong.

That is actually the rate in which an average cough travels expelling about 20,000 viruses carrying the potential to infect a number of people, according to LiveScience. Furthermore, the droplets released from a single cough remain suspended in the air for up to 10 minutes and is enough time for people to breathe it in and become infected.

If the droplets land on surface areas they can actually survive for days. Pretty dismal news right? Wisconsinites are known for a lot of things, cheese, fish fries, bubblers, Packers, and our long winters, unfortunately, along with that comes germs. A healthy immune system is probably the most effective way to ward off germs and plays a vital role in



Berry

your defense.

"The human immune system is very complicated and essential for survival," said Bruce Berry, an internal medicine physician with Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin's Westbrook Health Center in Waukesha. "The scientific evidence for support-

ing lifestyle changes and dietary supplements to improve the immune system is inconsistent and not at the level where blanket statements about what is right for everyone can apply."

Berry said most medical providers agree exercise stimulates the immune system function and there is evidence that short sessions of exercise as well as long-standing exercise habits both stimulate immune system activity.

"Sunlight and being outdoors both have a positive effect on immune activity, even with as little as 5 minutes a day," he said.

Along with all the other good habits, people should practice such as eating unprocessed foods, more natural probiotics such as the live cultures found in yogurt, frequent hand-washing and staying on top of vaccines, Barry suggests avoiding antibiotics unless necessary.

"Even small doses of antibiotics can kill billions of friend-

ly bacteria in your intestines and cause an upset in the balance there, allowing harmful bacteria to increase their presence in the body," he said.

Many chronic diseases alter the immune system and interfere with its function; including common conditions like high blood sugar, diabetes, asthma, rheumatoid conditions, and other autoimmune diseases, Barry explained.

"Controlling chronic health conditions is important for allowing the immune system to function normally," he added.

While it's important to acknowledge ways to boost your immune system, Barry said it's equally essential to avoid risk factors such as minimizing exposure to sick people, using hand sanitizer and hand washing often can reduce the number of infectious particles you are exposed to while going through your day.

"In other words don't force the immune system to do extra work," he said.



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A photograph of three children smiling. On the left is a boy with blonde hair wearing a grey button-down shirt. In the middle is a younger child with blonde hair wearing a black and white striped shirt. On the right is a girl with blonde hair wearing a black top with a colorful geometric pattern.

Tips to help your dog beat the winter blues

Our four-footed canine companions can have cabin fever as well

By Dave Fidlin
Special to The Freeman

It's no secret the long winter nights, unpredictable weather and frigid temperatures can take a toll on the human psyche — particularly late in the season when cabin fever sets in and there's an inevitable yearning to get outdoors and enjoy warmer weather.

Pet experts say our canine companions experience some of the same seasonal woes we endure when the temperatures plunge. This is especially true of dog breeds that thrive and feel their greatest sense of purpose while outdoors.

Just like people, seasonal depression can affect dogs in a number of ways, including low mood, irritability, feelings of lethargy, food cravings and, depending upon the diet.

"Dogs can get antsy and restless if they're not getting out and enjoying the outdoors," said Patti Muraczewski, a dog training expert and owner of



Mukwonago-based For Pets Sake. "But there's a lot of reasons we can't just go out and have them run around this time of the year."

Organizations such as the American Kennel Club sound out a call each winter for pet owners to encourage physical activity for their canine companion, particularly for pups who are still going through training.

"Even though it's winter, your dog still needs the physical and mental stimulation that comes from learning new

skills," Mary Burch of the AKC wrote in a blog post on the topic.

For most breeds, Burch said indoor training and exercise is typically an option at home with a few simple techniques.

"Small dogs can be easily exercised indoors by having them chase a ball in a hallway," Burch wrote in the blog post. "Canine freestyle (doggy dancing) moves are a good way to exercise larger dogs indoors."

Muraczewski, who gives talks and demonstrations locally about the impact the winter blues can have on dogs, said meal time can be a great way of stimulating dogs' minds.

"Make them work for their food. That way it's not just a free meal for them," Muraczewski said. "It stimulates a dog's mind, and it provides variety for them."

Mixing up mealtime, Muraczewski said, is especially beneficial for dogs that were bred with strong hunting and gathering instincts. "It's good for their body and mind," she

said. "It's good for people, too."

Burch said pet owners should seize whatever opportunities are available as breaks in winter conditions occur and get dogs outdoors.

"Put on your coat and go outside with your dog for a brisk exercise walk," Burch wrote in the AKC blog post. "For outdoor exercise and training, some breeds may need a winter coat, and if side-walks are salted, you may want to use boots with your dog, but when it comes to training, don't let winter stand in your way."

Indoor training classes, which are offered year-round at venues such as Muraczewski's facility also are a great way of ensuring dogs are active physically and mentally.

With a few tweaks, Muraczewski said dogs can remain healthy and active throughout Old Man Winter's presence.

"It really doesn't take a lot to make them happy," she said.



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Healthy eating options for seniors

“Let food be thy medicine” is a quote attributed to Hippocrates, the ancient scholar considered to be the father of modern medicine. The saying relates to the notion that what people put in their bodies can heal and/or prevent certain conditions.

For seniors with medicine cabinets full of over-the-counter and prescription medications, the idea of relying predominantly on food to promote optimal health may be tempting, and various foods can be particularly useful to the 50-and-over demographic.

According to the World Health Organization, poor diet is a major contributor to many of the diseases that affect older people. Poor diet has been connected to the development of diabetes, and degenerative diseases such as osteoporosis also may be linked to the foods ones eat. The National Council for Aging Care says micronutrient deficiency is often a problem among the aging due to factors like lack of variety in diet and reduced food intake. Eating a variety of foods can provide all of the nutrients people need to stay healthy as they get older. Certain foods may be particularly helpful.

- **Brain-friendly foods:** Foods such as avocado, leafy



vegetables, sunflower seeds, blueberries, and salmon are good sources of vitamin E, antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, and other nutrients that may help ward off dementias like Alzheimer’s disease, advises Sonas Home Health Care.

- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids may help prevent inflammation that can cause cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. Aging.com says foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, should be consumed at least twice per week.
- **Fruits and vegetables:**

Fresh, canned or frozen produce tend to be high in micronutrients, including a variety of important vitamins that are essential for all components of health. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics advises eating dark green vegetables, such as leafy greens or broccoli, and orange vegetables, such as carrots and sweet potatoes.

- **Energy-boosters:** Choose whole grains that can provide sustained energy by way of healthy carbohydrates over processed grains.

- **Bone-friendly foods:**

Calcium-rich foods, such as milk, yogurt and cheese, can prevent calcium from being leached from the bones, which contributes to conditions like osteoporosis.

- **Digestive system-friendly foods:** The digestive system slows down as the body ages, as the walls of the gastrointestinal tract thicken and digestive contractions that push waste along may slow down and become fewer. Foods rich in fiber can promote proper digestion by moving food through the digestive tract more easily. High-fiber foods also may help naturally reduce blood cholesterol levels.

- **High-iron foods:** Without enough iron in the body, a person may feel tired and lethargic from a reduced production of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the blood from the lungs to the rest of the body. A lack of oxygen in body tissues from anemia can be serious, says the National Council for Aging Care. Tofu, spinach, lentils, pumpkin seeds, and fortified breads and cereals are high in iron.

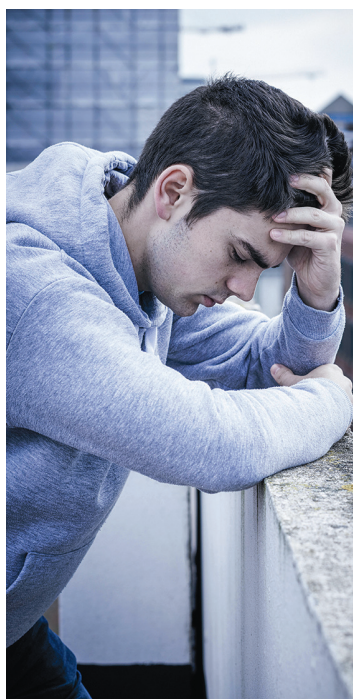
Smart food choices can help seniors live long and healthy lives.



Preventive care involves safeguarding mental health

Preventive care is often looked at through the needs people need to do to protect their physical well-being. For example, a healthy diet and routine exercise, while beneficial to mental health, are often viewed as lifestyle choices that can make people feel better physically. But taking steps to protect one’s mental health also is vital to a long, productive life.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that positive mental health and mental wellness can have a profoundly positive impact on a person’s life. Positive mental health can help people realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life and make meaningful contributions to their communities.



What can I do to protect my mental health?

Learning to recognize the early warning signs of mental health problems can help prevent such problems from escalating and compel people to seek help. The DHHS advises anyone feeling these signs or recognizing these signs in others to seek help for themselves or their loved ones:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or as if nothing matters
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry,

upset, worried, or scared

- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Persistent thoughts and memories you can’t get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- An inability to perform daily tasks, such as taking care of your children or getting to work or school

Taking steps to protect one’s mental wellness is a vital component of preventive care. More information about mental health is available at www.mentalhealth.gov.



Are you and your family at risk for vision loss?

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By Cheryl L. Dejewski

Will you enjoy a bright, clear future or one clouded by poor vision? The picture is up to you.

"Up to 50% of all blindness in the U.S. is preventable—if people pursue prompt diagnosis and treatment," says Mark Freedman, MD, senior partner of Eye Care Specialists, one of the state's leading ophthalmology practices.

According to eye surgeon Daniel Ferguson, MD, "Loss of vision can have serious consequences that affect quality of life and independence, including an increased risk for falling, car accidents, depression, isolation, and other factors. Failing sight can also increase the chance you'll need home care or nursing home placement." Daniel Paskowitz, MD, PhD, an ophthalmologist with credentials from Harvard and Johns Hopkins adds, "Poor vision, however, is not a fact of aging. It's important to discover what's behind any changes or symptoms—whether it's simply the need for a new eyeglass prescription or something more serious like a vision-threatening eye condition."



"There are two key reasons why you need to see a professional rather than rely on your own perception," says Brett Rhode, MD, Head of Ophthalmology at Aurora Sinai Medical Center. "First, problems in one eye can be masked by the other eye's ability to compensate. Second, changes can occur so gradually that they go unnoticed. For example, patients with cataracts often have no idea how much light, color, and clarity they've lost until they are diagnosed and the cloudy lens inside their eye is removed and replaced with an implant. And, patients with glaucoma can lose side vision so slowly that they don't realize it's like looking through a tunnel—with no chance of turning around and coming back out."

"Most vision-threatening conditions will eventually present symptoms if left untreated. But, do you really want to wait until whatever is wrong causes permanent damage or leads to something serious like falling and breaking a hip or having a car accident?," asks Michael Raciti, MD, who conducts continuing education presentations for area eye care professionals. "That's why it's vital to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam (which is typically covered by Medicare and/or insurance) at least every two years. And, at our offices, your exam may also include a diagnostic OCT laser scan, which enables us to catch diseases even earlier."

"If your eye care specialist determines that you do have a cataract, macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, or other condition, you can plan a course of treatment to protect and preserve your vision. But, that plan can't start until you take the first step to call and schedule an exam. Don't wait until it's too late. Make sure you see life to the fullest now and in the future," says medical optometrist David Scheidt, OD.

For FREE booklets on the conditions previously mentioned, call 414-321-7035. For a comprehensive eye exam call the offices below—two are just minutes away from Brookfield, Elm Grove, Waukesha and Lake Country.



WARNING SIGNS

Poor vision or changes should not be dismissed. Schedule an appointment ASAP if you notice:

- Foggy, fuzzy, double or blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light and glare
- "Starbursts" around lights
- Holding items closer to view
- Needing brighter light to read
- Fading or yellowing of colors
- Difficulty judging stairs/curbs
- Difficulty with driving at night
- Vision affects daily tasks
- Vertical lines appear wavy
- Dark or blind spots in vision
- Glasses/prescription changes don't help



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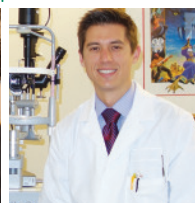
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Common household poisons that put kids in harm's way

Childhood is time of exploration for youngsters. Curiosity is a healthy way for kids to broaden their horizons. However, in an effort to learn more about their worlds, children may find themselves in harm's way.

The Victoria State Government says accidental poisoning is most commonly a problem in young children. Most poisonings happen at home, but they also can occur while visiting friends and family or while on vacation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that more than 300 children in the United States between the ages of zero and 19 are treated in an emergency department every day, and two children die as a result of being poisoned.

Parents may think that only chemicals with clear warning labels pose a threat to youngsters. However, many everyday items can be poisonous. Here's how to recognize some of the more common hazards lurking in typical homes.

Medications

Medications account for roughly half of potentially toxic exposures, according to



NYU Langone Health. A child who gets into over-the-counter or prescription medications can be in real trouble. To children, medicines may seem like food, beverages, candy, or toys. Some medicines need not be ingested to be dangerous, so make sure all are kept well beyond the reach of curious tykes.

Pesticides/herbicides

Chemicals used to treat lawns and gardens may be toxic to children and pets. It is important to read labels thor-

oughly and to always strictly follow instructions.

Household plants

Houseplants can be dangerous. Although many common indoor plants only cause mild gastrointestinal symptoms if consumed, daffodils, dumb cane, foxglove, hydrangea, lilies, oleanders, rhododendrons, and wisteria, may have toxins that can affect the stomach, respiratory system, liver, or heart. Speak with a pediatrician about how to keep kids safe around these plants.

Alcohol/nicotine

It may only take a small amount of alcohol to make children ill. Alcohol can be found in beverages, but also in perfume, mouthwash, cleaning products, hand sanitizers, and over-the-counter cold medications. NYU Langone says alcohol poisoning in children can cause low blood sugar, which can lead to seizures and coma.

Liquid nicotine or nicotine replacement gum can be hazardous as well. Illicit substances also carry serious health consequences for children. Changes in breathing, unconsciousness or seizures may result depending on the substance.

Keeping children away from potential poisons takes diligence. Certain substances may be best kept behind lock and key and/or up high where curious hands cannot reach. Homes should have the poison prevention hotline number clearly displayed. The CDC also recommends discarding unused products, medicines and vitamins to limit children's access to them.



Some surprising effects of insufficient sleep

Many people wish they could get more sleep. Whether they're professionals facing the challenges of demanding careers or parents juggling the responsibilities of work and family, many men and women find it difficult to get a full night's sleep.

A restless night here or there likely is not much to worry about. However, a recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more than one-third of adults in the United States were not getting enough sleep on a regular basis. Routinely failing to get a good night's rest can have a profound effect on a person's overall well-being.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, insufficient sleep will not make a person sick any more than getting enough sleep will prevent illness. However, the NSF notes that failing to get enough sleep can adversely affect a person's



immune system. That makes people more susceptible to cold or flu. That vulnerability is linked cytokines, a type of protein made by the body that targets infection and inflammation. Cytokines are produced and released during sleep, so without enough sleep, a person won't produce or release enough cytokines. That can throw off the immune system response, rendering it less

effective when confronting colds and the flu.

The NSF also notes that vaccines might not be as effective if people are not getting enough sleep. That's because chronic sleep loss, which refers to prolonged periods of inadequate sleep as opposed to random nights in which shut-eye proved elusive, reduces the body's ability to respond to viruses like the flu. Even peo-

ple who have been vaccinated against the flu need their immune systems to be operating at full strength to fight the flu. Without adequate sleep, the immune system cannot perform at peak capacity.

A heightened risk for diabetes is another surprising side effect of prolonged periods of insufficient sleep. The online medical resource Healthline.com notes that lack of sleep affects the body's release of insulin, a hormone responsible for lowering blood sugar levels. People who do not get enough sleep have high blood sugar levels, which increases their risk for type 2 diabetes.

Busy adults often sacrifice sleep to meet the demands of everyday life. But such sacrifices can produce some surprising side effects that may make men and women reconsider their daily sleep routines.



Debunking some myths about radon

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that forms when certain radioactive metals break down in rocks, soil and groundwater. Though radon is naturally occurring, when people are exposed to it at levels deemed to be excessive, the consequences can be dire. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.

Many people first learn of radon when buying a home. Home inspectors may ask prospective homeowners if they want radon tests conducted on a home they've made an offer on, leaving some to wonder what radon is and how, if it's naturally occurring, it can pose such a potentially significant threat? That unfamiliarity may lead some prospective home buyers to begin researching radon, which unfortunately is not always so easy. That's because there exists a host of misinformation about radon, so much so that the Environmental Protection Agency feels it necessary to debunk a host of myths regarding radon.



Myth: Scientists are not sure radon is a legitimate problem.

Reality: All major health organizations, including the CDC and the American Medical Association, agree that radon causes thousands of preventable lung cancer deaths every year.

Myth: Radon only affects certain types of homes.

Reality: No home is immune to excessive radon levels. The way a home is constructed may affect its radon levels, but even homes con-

structed in ways to prevent radon levels from becoming excessive are not immune to high levels of radon.

Myth: My neighbor's home has low radon levels so mine must as well.

Reality: Radon levels vary from home to home. A neighboring home that is mere feet away from your own may have low radon levels, but that does not mean the homes surrounding it do as well. The EPA notes that testing is the only way to determine if a home has a radon problem.

Myth: Homes with radon problems cannot be fixed.

Reality: House hunters can breathe a sigh of relief if a home they like has been determined to have high levels of radon. The EPA notes that radon issues cannot just be addressed, but addressed in a way that should not bust homeowners' budgets. Prospective home buyers might even be able to negotiate radon remediation into the terms of their buying agreements.

Myth: Radon is geographically-specific.

Reality: High levels of radon have been discovered in every state of the United States, a country so geographically diverse that it's reasonable to conclude that no place on Earth is immune to radon.

Radon can be deadly, but thankfully it's often easily fixed and should not necessarily deter home buyers from making an offer on homes they like.



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Don't get caught off guard by glaucoma

Vision should never be taken for granted. Appreciating one's sense of sight involves scheduling routine eye exams and taking steps to protect one's eyes. But safeguarding vision also involves understanding the various conditions that can affect eye health.

Glaucoma is a group of eye disorders that can lead to progressive damage to the optic nerve. People who experience glaucoma can lose nerve tissue and eventually suffer vision loss. Understanding what contributes to glaucoma can help people take the steps necessary to reduce their risk.

The American Optometric Association says that glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness for people over the age of 60 — although it can occur at any age. The Mayo Clinic states that many forms of glaucoma produce no warning signs and changes in vision may occur so gradually they are not detected until the condition has reached an advanced stage.

There are various types of glaucoma. However, primary open-angle glaucoma is the



most common form, affecting about three million Americans, indicates the Glaucoma Research Foundation. Primary open-angle glaucoma occurs when the eye's drainage canals become clogged over time and fluid cannot drain out of the eye. As a result, intraocular pressure rises and damages the optic nerve, which is responsible for transmitting signals from the eye to the brain. People with a family history of glaucoma, African Americans over age 40 and Hispanics over

the age of 60 have an increased risk, says the AOA. Those with thin corneas, which is the outer layer of the eye, also are at an elevated risk of developing glaucoma.

A less common type of glaucoma is called acute-closure glaucoma, which occurs due to an abrupt and rapid increase of eye pressure. This is an emergency situation that requires prompt care to prevent vision loss.

An eye doctor will conduct various tests to determine if a

patient is at risk for glaucoma. The Mayo Clinic says tonometry is commonly used to measure intraocular pressure. During this test, the eye surface will be anesthetized with special drops. A tonometer will be applied lightly to the cornea, indenting it slightly. The resistance will be measured and calculated to determine if pressure is present. Other tests include the following:

- imaging tests that look for optic nerve damage that involve a dilated eye examination;
- visual field tests to check for areas of vision loss;
- pachymetry, which measures corneal thickness; and
- an inspection of the drainage angle of the eye.

The effects of glaucoma cannot be reversed, but glaucoma can be caught early. Medications and lifestyle changes, like more frequent eye exams, can improve symptoms. Prescription eye drops can reduce the production of aqueous humor (fluid) in the eye and improve outflow of that fluid. Oral medications and surgery are other options as well.

Stop eye strain before it starts

It's that time of the year when many areas of the country are under the cold cloak of winter. Unforgiving temperatures can translate into an increase in hours spent indoors, whether at work or at home, and more time relying on devices to pass the hours.

Spending more time watching television, playing video games, texting friends, or browsing the internet can lead

to a condition known as "computer vision eye strain." Eye strain also may be caused through intense eye use, such as while driving long distances or engaging in activities that require close attention, such as crafting or reading.

The American Optometric Association says digital eye strain can result in various forms of discomfort, which increase with the amount of

screen use. The most common symptoms include:

- headaches;
- blurred vision;
- dry, watery or burning eyes;
- increased sensitivity to light; and
- neck and shoulder pain.

The AOA says viewing a computer or digital screen often makes the eyes have to work harder. The AOA notes this is different from reading a printed page. The letters are not as precise or sharply defined, and areas of contrast can be muted. Also, the presence of glare and reflections on the screen may make viewing difficult. Furthermore, the Mayo Clinic says people tend to blink less while using digital devices, and view them at less than ideal distances or angles.

Alleviating eye strain from digital sources involves making changes in daily habits or the environment. Taking regular eye breaks, and looking at objects from different dis-

tances can help them focus. These tips may help as well.

- Adjust the lighting to reduce glare on screens or your task.
- Limit screen time as much as possible and engage in other activities.
- Consider the use of artificial tears products to lubricate dry eyes.
- Choose the right eyewear, and work with an eye professional to find products that can assist you. Specialized glasses or contact lenses are designed for computer work. Investigate tintings and coatings that also may help.
- Blink often to refresh the eyes.
- Talk to a doctor if eye strain persists or changes in severity.

When the weather gets cold, people may rely on digital devices for recreation more than they otherwise would. Avoiding eye strain in such situations can help people avoid discomfort.

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How to incorporate more heart-healthy foods into your diet

Diet and heart health go hand in hand. The American Heart Association notes that a healthy diet and lifestyle are the best weapons to fight cardiovascular diseases, which the World Health Organization says kill more people across the globe each year than any other disease.

Men and women do not need degrees in nutrition science to create heart-healthy diets for themselves and their families. In fact, the familiar calls to “eat your fruits and vegetables” many adults recall from childhood lessons or nights around the family dinner table still bear weight today. A diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables is a hallmark of a healthy lifestyle. And supplementing such a diet with other heart-healthy foods is a great way to reduce one’s risk for cardiovascular disease.

Fruits and vegetables

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that fruits and vegetables are healthy whether they’re fresh, frozen, canned, and/or dried. The AHA advises eating fruits and vegetables with every meal and snack, and that may require a little creativity as you sneak them into favorite dishes. For example, the AHA suggests replacing half the ground meat in recipes for burgers, meatloaf or meatballs with cooked chopped mushrooms. The mushrooms can be finely chopped with a knife or food processor, and then sautéed in some olive oil until they’re soft. They can then be



mixed in with the lean meat, and the meal can be cooked as it normally would. At the breakfast table, add fruit to a bowl of cereal to make for a more flavorful morning meal.

Dairy products

When purchasing dairy

products, the DHHS recommends sticking to fat-free or low-fat options. Replace whole milk with fat-free or 1 percent milk and buy only fat-free or low-fat cheese. When snacking, reach for fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt or cottage cheese. You can even add fruit or veg-

etables to such snacks to make snack time even more heart-healthy.

Proteins

Healthy proteins are another way people can promote heart health with their daily diets. When choosing proteins at the grocery store, the AHA recommends choosing chicken and fish over red meats. That’s because red meats, which include beef and lamb, have more saturated fat than chicken and fish. Saturated fats increase blood cholesterol levels and can worsen heart disease, while the unsaturated fats in fish like salmon can actually reduce the risk for cardiovascular issues like heart failure and ischemic stroke. When preparing poultry, remove the skin, as most of the saturated fat in poultry is found just beneath the skin.

Grains

When buying grains, the DHHS recommends reading the ingredients list on the package before purchasing. Make sure whole wheat or another whole grain is the first item listed in the ingredients list, and choose only those products that say 100 percent whole grain. Instead of preparing white rice as a side dish, serve brown or wild rice, quinoa or oats.

A heart-healthy diet is easy to design and just as flavorful as less healthy alternatives.



Did you know?

According to the World Health Organization, drowning is one of the top five causes of death for people between the ages of one and 14. In the United States, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death among children between one and 14 years of age. Many instances that involve the drowning deaths of children occur in pools, oceans, lakes, or

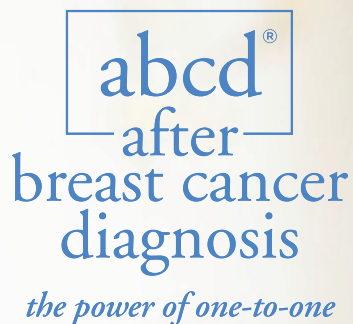
other bodies of water, but some occur inside children’s own homes as well. While there are no up-to-date statistics indicating the number of young children who die in bathtub-related accidents each year, the tub is enough of a threat to youngsters that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children four years of age and younger always be accompanied by a parent or

caregiver when in the bathtub.

It only takes a moment for playful bathtime fun to turn tragic, so parents should never leave young children unattended. Parents should make sure to run a supply check before placing children in the bathtub to ensure they do not forget a bath towel or another supply and should not leave children unattended in the bathroom, even if kids are not yet in the

tub, to go and find a necessary supply. In addition, parents who feel as though they need to exit the bathroom, however briefly, once a bath has started should first take their child out of the tub, wrap them in a towel and drain the tub before taking the child with them and leaving the room.





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