

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter[®]

MAY 2022

May is Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month.



Asthma Advice

Asthma is a chronic condition of the lungs' airways, causing them to narrow and become inflamed. This produces coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing. For some people, asthma is a minor nuisance. For others, it can be a major problem that interferes with daily activities and may lead to life-threatening asthma attacks.



Respiratory viruses, including colds or flu, can worsen your asthmatic symptoms. If you have moderate-to-severe asthma, your risk of being hospitalized for COVID-19 increases.

While asthma can't be cured, its symptoms can be controlled. And because asthma often changes over time, it's important that you work with your health care provider to track your signs, manage symptoms and adjust treatment as needed.

If you have asthma, you may not know the precautions for reducing symptoms and your risk for asthma attacks and serious illness. As a reminder:

- Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke.
- Avoid air pollution from factories, cars and wildfire smoke.
- Reduce exposure to dust and dust mites.
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- Use a HEPA air purifier.
- Avoid using sprays.
- Make sure you have good air ventilation.



Sinus infections, allergies and acid reflux can increase asthma attacks. Other triggers: physical exercise, high humidity, breathing in cold, dry air, some foods, food additives and fragrances.

Know the signs that your asthma may be worsening: more frequent, bothersome symptoms; increasing difficulty breathing, as measured with a peak flow meter; and needing to use a quick-relief inhaler more often.

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Safety Corner: Green Thumb**, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V5tools.

BEST bits



■ **A reminder during Skin Cancer Prevention Month: Cover up under the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays to prevent skin cancer.** Skin cancer risks include: light skin, prior skin cancer, family history and sunburning easily as well as having several moles and freckles. When outdoors, use a sunscreen labeled **broad spectrum** (UVA and UVB rays) with an SPF of at least 30; reapply every two hours and after sweating or swimming (even if you don't have light skin, use sunscreen). The most common signs of skin cancer: a change in your skin, including a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal or a change in a mole.

■ **As we age, some gradual mental (cognitive) decline is normal.** You may occasionally forget names and misplace things. But frequently forgetting conversations, information, appointments and other planned events that you'd usually remember indicates **mild cognitive impairment (MCI)** — the stage between mental changes of normal aging and early-stage dementia. MCI can be due to Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease and other conditions, including depression; anxiety; thyroid, kidney or liver problems; sleep disorders; and conditions affecting blood flow to the brain. Sometimes MCI is temporary and due to reactions to medications, including over-the-counter sleeping pills or antihistamines that cause drowsiness.

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date pandemic information visit coronavirus.gov.

Food feeds our souls. It is the single great unifier across all cultures. The table offers a sanctuary and a place to come together for unity and understanding.

— Lidia Bastianich



TIP of the MONTH

Vegetables on Your Mind

In addition to well-known benefits for heart health, it turns out that eating vegetables can also benefit our mood. A new study found that people who ate at least three servings of vegetables per day reported better psychological well-being and had higher scores on a subjective happiness scale than people eating fewer vegetables. It's likely a combination of vitamins, fiber and antioxidants that offer this beneficial effect.

eating smart

Sugar vs. Artificial Sweeteners

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Craving sweets is common, and it's fine to indulge occasionally as part of a nutritious eating plan.

You may wonder whether it's better to choose sweet foods and beverages that are made with sugar or with artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame or sucralose. The truth is, there's no clear winner.

Sugar has 15 calories and four grams of carbohydrate per teaspoon. Nutrition guidelines recommend no more than 12 teaspoons of added sugars per day. Some people prefer the taste of sugar compared to artificial sweeteners, and appreciate that it's more natural rather than artificial. But sugar has been linked with tooth decay, and excess amounts (above 12 teaspoons per day) have been linked to weight gain, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. For context, a can of soda contains ten teaspoons sugar.

Artificial sweeteners are much sweeter than sugar, but have zero calories and usually no carbohydrates. People with type 2 diabetes may prefer artificial sweeteners over sugar because they have less effect on blood sugar levels. And people looking to lose weight may choose artificial sweeteners due to their lower calorie count. Here's where it gets murky: Some studies show that artificial sweeteners may actually increase the risk of weight gain, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. The research is ongoing.

Bottom line: Choose whichever you prefer, since both are fine in small amounts. But overall, it's best to simply choose fewer sweets, such as soft drinks, candy, pastries, ice cream and chocolate, whether they are made with sugar or artificial sweeteners. These foods are considered treats, not staple foods, so limit your intake no matter how they are sweetened.



One-Pan Baked Shrimp and Vegetables

EASY recipe

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 2 cups broccoli florets | 2 tsp Italian seasoning |
| 1 zucchini, sliced | 2 cloves garlic, minced |
| 1 small red onion, cut to ½-inch slices | 1½ lb. shrimp, deveined |
| 1 yellow pepper, cut into strips | 2 tbsp finely chopped parsley |
| 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil | 1 lemon, cut into wedges |
| ½ tsp salt | |



Preheat oven to 400°F. **Line** a sheet pan with foil or parchment paper. **In** a large bowl, combine broccoli, zucchini, onion and peppers. **Add** olive oil, salt, Italian seasoning and garlic, and stir to combine. **Pour** the vegetables onto the sheet pan and bake 20 minutes. **Remove** sheet pan from oven. **Add** shrimp to sheet pan and bake 5-8 more minutes or until shrimp are cooked. **Stir** together and add to a serving platter. **Garnish** with parsley and a squeeze of lemon and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 256 calories | 37g protein | 8g total fat | 1g saturated fat | 5g mono fat | 2g poly fat | 10g carbohydrate | 4g sugar | 4g fiber | 512mg sodium

The Myth of Multitasking

We can't do two things well at once.

When we multitask, we switch our attention between two tasks, often performing less effectively at both. The idea of multitasking has been around for decades and first referred to using a single computer to simultaneously carry out two or more jobs.

Everyday examples: We text or answer email while in meetings, play video games when chatting with family, take notes during a lecture, drive while talking on our phones or cook dinner while helping our kids with homework. Being a multitasker may be a point of pride for some, implying mental dexterity and effective productivity.



Multitasking can help us save time in some cases, but research suggests that trying to do more than one **challenging** task at a time may decrease our overall productivity instead. Most people tend to work slower and less efficiently when multitasking because of the increased mental demand of jumping from one thing to another.

Staying focused on one task at a time can increase work productivity. If you are dedicated to multitasking, but you start more tasks than you can finish, start prioritizing your tasks in order of importance. Begin with your most demanding assignments and finish your day with lighter and less time-consuming tasks whenever you can.

Getting Your Child Ready for Camp

Summer camp is around the corner. Whether your child is headed to a day or an overnight camp, getting your child ready now can help make the experience more fun and avoid unnecessary stress for all of you.

Contact your pediatrician's office to see if your child needs a checkup. Make sure all vaccinations are current and complete a camp-required health history form and an emergency contact sheet.

Talk to the camp director about your child's needs, including the use of emergency medications, such as asthma inhalers.

Tips to get youngsters ready:

Plan practice sleepovers. If your child has never been away from home without you, plan a sleepover or two at a friend or grandparent's house.

Talk about camp rules. Make sure your youngster understands if the camp is off-grid (no electronics allowed) or has rules about using phones and other smart devices.



Let your child ask questions, and look up answers together.

Is there a camp store for extra snacks or to replace a lost toothbrush? Can parents stay for a while the first day or is there a drop-off rule?

Acknowledge that homesickness may occur. Let your child know camp can take getting used to, but emphasize the fun experiences they'll have. Together, look at photos or videos of camp activities.

“Somebody was once a nobody who wanted to and did.”

— John Burroughs



Don't guess about your eye health.

May is **Healthy Vision Month**, an opportunity to learn about your risk of eye disease. Everyone older than age 60, African Americans older than age 40 and anyone with a history of glaucoma should have a dilated eye exam every one to two years. If you have diabetes, hypertension or any vision problems, talk to your eye care provider about when you need an eye exam. Learn more at nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health.

Your body hears
everything your
mind says.

— Naomi Judd



Learning to recognize a stroke saves lives. During **Stroke Awareness Month**, learn about **FAST**, a quick way to know if someone is probably having a stroke:

F – Face drooping on one side?

A – Arms don't both stay upright when raised?

S – Speech is slurred or strange?

T – Time to call 911 for urgent medical assistance if you note any or all of the FAST symptoms.

Visit the American Stroke Association at [stroke.org](https://www.stroke.org) for more information, including how to lower your risk of stroke.

body&mind

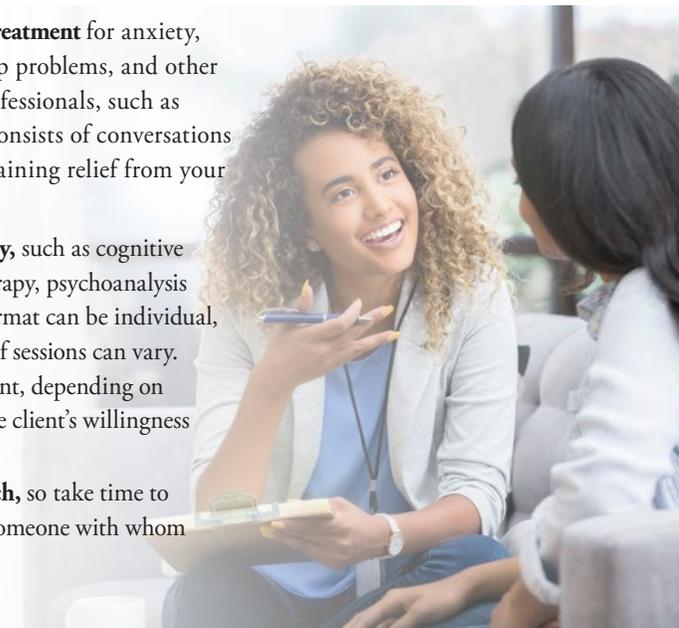
Q: What is talk therapy?

A: **Psychotherapy, or talk therapy, is treatment** for anxiety, addictions, depression, relationship problems, and other concerns. Often delivered by licensed professionals, such as psychologists or social workers, therapy consists of conversations in which the professional guides you in gaining relief from your symptoms or pursuing your goals.

There are many different forms of therapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, psychoanalysis and family systems therapy. The therapy format can be individual, couples, family or group, and the number of sessions can vary. Most therapy clients experience improvement, depending on factors including the therapist's skill and the client's willingness to follow through on recommendations.

Most important, however, is a good match, so take time to do your research and shop around to find someone with whom you'll be comfortable working.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Fitness Parks

Public parks can be more than places for walks and picnics.

In fact, there's a movement to provide accessible fitness equipment in parks and create free fitness parks to promote regular physical activity for more people.

Physical activity is a national health priority, according to the CDC. Regular exercise lowers the risk for health problems ranging from type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease to depression and anxiety disorders. What's more, as people begin using local parks to exercise more, research shows residents of nearby neighborhoods often are inspired to take the initiative and pursue a healthier lifestyle.

You won't find the high-tech fitness equipment common in indoor gyms at fitness parks, and the equipment available often varies between locations. But, according to research, you are likely to find weather-resistant tools for strength building, balance and aerobic exercise, including ski machines, push-up bars, balance beams, rope climbs and equipment for performing leg presses.

Many communities don't have the resources to build new outdoor fitness spaces in parks. But there's good news: Nonprofit organizations, including FitLot and AARP, are helping towns throughout the U.S. build more outdoor fitness parks so more people can enjoy an active lifestyle.

To see if there's a fitness park near you, visit the **FitLot map** at [fitlot.org/parks](https://www.fitlot.org/parks) or search for **outdoor fitness parks** and your location.



May is High Blood Pressure Education Month.



Q: Risks for high blood pressure?

A: High blood pressure usually causes no symptoms but can lead to heart disease and stroke. The American Heart Association recommends blood pressure checks at least every two years starting at age 20 — or more often if it's high, or you're at increased risk. High blood pressure risks include:



Factors you can't modify: Increased age, family history of hypertension and African American ancestry can increase your risk for high blood pressure.

Factors you may be able to modify: People who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of hypertension. Inadequate physical activity, excess stress, smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and consumption of too much salt or not enough potassium can elevate your blood pressure. So can drinking more than one alcoholic drink daily for women or two daily for men. Chronic conditions, such as kidney disease, diabetes and sleep apnea, also increase the risk for high blood pressure.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

May is Arthritis Awareness Month.



Arthritis and You

After decades of hard work, your joints will degenerate or erode to some degree. The most common form of joint disease is **osteoarthritis**, which:

- Is the leading cause of physical disability in the U.S.
- Occurs with thinning of the cartilage, a rubbery tissue that covers and cushions the ends of your bones where they form joints.
- Affects primarily the hips, knees, lower back, hands and neck.
- Causes inflammation, pain, stiffness and reduced function at the affected joint.



Primary triggers include past joint injuries, aging and being overweight. To protect your bones:

- **Lose excess weight to decrease stress on your joints.** The more overweight you are, the earlier the potential onset of OA.
- **Strengthen the muscles around your joints** to help slow OA progression and reduce cartilage damage. For example, moderate strength training of your quadriceps (thigh muscles) can reduce the pain of OA in your hips, knees and back.
- **Physical therapy and stretching techniques** can often help control the progression of OA and help protect your mobility.
- **Long-term sitting can tighten muscles and stiffen joints.** If you have OA, you need daily physical activity to maintain your joint function.
- **During exercise and sports** stay aware to avoid trauma or major overuse of your joints.
- **Choose more anti-inflammatory foods**, such as fatty fish, vegetables and fruit. Studies suggest the Mediterranean-style diet may help improve OA symptoms. Get enough calcium, vitamin D and vitamin K, which help improve bone strength. Avoid smoking and limit alcohol use.

If you have persistent joint pain, consult your health care provider for advice on reducing its effects.

Great effort springs naturally from great attitude.

— Pat Riley



National Women's Health Week, May 8

to 14, emphasizes every woman's unique health journey. Whether you're in your 20s or 90s, or any decade in between, take time this week to learn how to protect and improve your health. The Office of Women's Health at womenshealth.gov offers steps you can take to live your healthiest life at any age, including information on mental health, avoiding disease risks, ways to work exercise into your day, checkups you shouldn't skip, and when to see your health care provider.

dollars&sense

TD Tip: Zero-Down Home Loans

By Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, AFC

Down payments are often a deal-breaker for buying a home. Many consumers have steady jobs and good credit but saving considerable sums of money may be out of reach. Zero-down home loans allow the borrower to purchase a home without having to put money down. While zero-down loans make it possible for consumers to buy houses, they are not a good idea. Below are a few reasons why:

Higher interest rates: Needing a zero-down loan signals to creditors that you are unable to save. Higher interest rates will cause you to pay more over the life of the loan.

More interest: Zero down on a mortgage means that you will pay more in interest over the life of the loan. For example, if you want to buy a home for \$250,000 at 4% interest for 30 years, you will pay \$179,840 in interest over the life of the loan. If you put 5% down on the home and took out a loan for \$237,500, you would pay \$158,240 in interest, saving \$21,600.

Property mortgage insurance (PMI): A zero-down mortgage will mean that you have to insure your loan to reduce the lender's risk. If you owe more than 80% on the value of your house, lenders require you to pay PMI premiums until your loan balance is under 80%. This payment is added to your monthly mortgage payment.

Last word: Save for a down payment on a home; even 3% makes a difference.

safety solutions

Teens at Work

Teens can benefit from jobs or internships during summer break from school, gaining experience and income.

While they may say, "it's just a summer job," that doesn't mean they don't have a right to a safe workplace. Make sure they come away with a good experience:

Know where your child is working and ask questions about the job.

Teach them to ask questions if they don't understand something or if something seems unsafe.

Remind them that they have the right to a safe workplace.

Encourage them to report hazards or unsafe conditions to their supervisors. **Tip:** You can offer to help them report hazards.

Remind them to wear safety gear required for their job.

Watch for signs of concern, such as increased stress levels, anxiety and fatigue.



May is National Lyme Disease Awareness Month.



Lyme Disease: Protect Yourself

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by ticks — primarily deer ticks or black-legged ticks. It affects people of all ages and usually, but not always, causes symptoms such as rash, fever, headache, muscle or joint pain and fatigue. If treated quickly, you can recover. If not treated early, the infection can spread to your joints, heart and nervous system. Here are the best ways to prevent Lyme disease:

- **Avoid tick habitats**, such as leaf piles, woods, tall grasses and tree trunks.
- **Wear shoes, socks, long pants tucked into socks and a hat** when outdoors. **Tip:** light-colored clothing can help you spot ticks.
- **On skin, use repellents** with DEET, picaridin or lemon eucalyptus oil. Use permethrin on clothing and shoes.
- **When outdoors and after being outdoors**, do a thorough tick check.
- **Shower immediately after being outdoors.** You can wash away any unattached ticks and inspect yourself for attached ticks.



- **Kill ticks.** Before you wash your clothes, put them in a hot dryer for ten minutes.
- **Protect and check your pets.** Your pet's fur can often hide ticks. Ask your veterinarian about tick protection for your pets.

May is Osteoporosis Month.



Best Bone Builders

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

As Americans are living longer, protecting our bone health is more important than ever. By age 50, about half of us will have weak bones, according to the National Institutes of Health, leading to osteoporosis (porous bones). We can lessen this outcome through healthy diet and lifestyle at every age.

Bone is made mostly of (1) collagen, a structural protein that acts as a building block for your bones, teeth, muscles, skin, joints and connective tissues; and **(2) calcium phosphate**, a mineral that adds strength, hardens your body’s framework and provides flexibility. A lack of physical activity and low intake of dietary calcium over one’s lifetime can contribute to low bone mass, bone loss, high fracture risk and osteoporosis.

Bone up on osteoporosis:

1. About 54 million Americans have low bone density or osteoporosis.
2. It causes bones to become so weak and brittle as we age that a fall or even mild stresses, such as bending over or coughing, can cause a fracture.
3. Osteoporosis-related fractures most commonly occur in the hip, wrist or spine.
4. One in two women and up to one in four men over age 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis.
5. Men and women of all races can have the disease.



6. Osteoporosis is commonly called a “silent disease” and breaking a bone is often the first clue that you have it.
7. While the disease is more common in older people, it can strike at any age.
8. Vitamin D and vitamin K can help your body use calcium needed for maintaining bone density. Check with your health care provider about possibly needing supplements.
9. People of all ages can strengthen bone density and prevent osteoporosis by staying physically active and getting enough calcium, vitamin D and vitamin K.
10. Some negative habits that raise your risk for osteoporosis include tobacco use, more than two alcoholic drinks a day, and a sedentary lifestyle.

Discuss osteoporosis with your provider if you experienced early menopause or took corticosteroids for several months at a time, or if either of your parents had hip fractures. Your provider may recommend a bone mineral density test, which is simple, painless, takes five to ten minutes and uses very little radiation.

Best Bone Builders

Include physical activity in your daily routine throughout life. Fit in frequent walks and weight-bearing exercise, such as climbing stairs, jogging, dancing, tennis and elliptical/treadmill workouts.

Get adequate calcium in your diet. For adults ages 19 to 50 and men ages 51 to 70, the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) is 1,000 mg a day. For women after age 50 and men after age 70, increase to 1,200 mg a day.

Get adequate vitamin D. The RDA for adults ages 19 to 70 is 600 IUs a day.

Get enough vitamin K₂. A higher intake of K₂ improves bone density and decreases fracture risk. RDA for vitamin K is 90 to 120 mcg. Of that, about ten to 45 mcg should specifically be vitamin K₂.

Good food sources for calcium include:

- Low-fat dairy products.
- Dark green leafy vegetables.
- Canned salmon or sardines with bones.
- Soy products, such as tofu.
- Calcium-fortified cereals and orange juice.
- Almonds.

Good sources for vitamin D include:

- Trout and salmon.
- Cod liver oil.
- Milk and cereal fortified with vitamin D.

Good sources of vitamin K₂ include:

- Dairy products.
- Eggs.
- Chicken.
- Fermented foods, such as sauerkraut and natto.



DR. ZORBA'S corner

Vaping Dangers

Vaping has exploded in popularity with people thinking it's safer than smoking. Vaping exposes your lungs to nicotine and other toxic chemicals, such as lead, chromium, nickel and formaldehyde. And the long-term health effects of vaping are unknown. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, and all contain propylene glycol and glycerol, chemicals known to cause lung damage and cancer. Vaping is just as addictive as cigarette smoking. Especially at risk are teens. The teenage brain is still developing, making it easier to be addicted. A 2020 study revealed that more teens are using e-cigarettes than regular cigarettes. Nicotine can have deleterious effects on learning, memory and attention, all important for school work. Vaping has not been approved as a way to stop smoking despite what some claim.

— Zorba Paster, MD

May

Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

Find out how well you know the topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

- 1 Nutrition guidelines recommend no more than 12 teaspoons of _____ sugars per day.
- 2 Everyone older than 60, African Americans older than 40 and anyone with a history of glaucoma should have a _____ eye exam every one to two years.
- 3 _____ is a form of treatment for anxiety, addictions, depression, relationship problems, and other concerns.
- 4 _____ is a quick way to know if someone is probably having a stroke.
- 5 _____ usually causes no symptoms but can lead to heart disease and stroke.
- 6 _____ is the leading cause of physical disability in the U.S.
- 7 Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by _____.
- 8 _____ causes bones to become so weak and brittle as we age that a fall or even mild stresses, such as bending over or coughing, can cause a fracture.

Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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