

A photograph of an elderly couple embracing each other. The woman is on the left, leaning over the man on the right. Both are smiling warmly. They are wearing light blue shirts. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

Healthy Living

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Self Care
- & more!

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What sufficient sleep does for the human body

Sleep is an often unsung hero of overall health. Diet and exercise get their fair share of glory, but without a good night's rest, even the most physically active, nutrition-conscious individuals are vulnerable to a host of ailments and illnesses.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, most adults need seven or more hours of sleep on a regular schedule each night. Athletes may even benefit from additional sleep. In fact, a 2011 study published in the journal *Sleep* examined the effects of sleep extension on the athletic performance of collegiate basketball players. That study found that athletes asked to extend their normal sleep times exhibited faster sprint times and increased free-throw accuracy and a reduction in fatigue at the end of the sleep extension period.

Improved athletic performance is not the only way that sufficient sleep benefits the human body.

SUFFICIENT SLEEP AND THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

The Mayo Clinic notes that the immune system releases proteins called cytokines during sleep. The release of certain cytokines needs to increase when individuals are experiencing infections or inflammation, which is one reason why doctors often recommend extra sleep to sick patients. Without adequate sleep, the immune system may not produce enough cytokines, and that can increase the frequency with which individuals get sick.

SUFFICIENT SLEEP AND WEIGHT GAIN

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health reports there is mounting evidence to suggest a link between insufficient sleep and weight gain and obesity. Studies exploring this potential link have been conducted for decades and have examined how sleep

affects people of all ages and genders. At the 2006 American Thoracic Society International Conference, researchers who had tracked women's sleep habits for 16 years found that those who slept just six hours per night were 12 percent more likely to experience major weight gain than women who slept seven hours per night. Experts aren't entirely sure why this relationship exists, but the results of various studies support the idea that insufficient sleep is a potential catalyst for gaining weight.

Sufficient sleep and chronic disease
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that insufficient sleep has been linked to the development and management of various chronic diseases. For example, the CDC indicates that insufficient sleep has been linked to an increased risk for type 2 diabetes. In addition, the CDC reports that instances of hy-



pertension, stroke, coronary heart disease, and irregular heartbeat are more common among individuals with disordered sleep than they are among people without such sleep abnormalities.

Sleep is not often mentioned alongside diet and exercise as a vital component of overall health. But a good night's rest is no less vital to long-term health than a healthy diet and physical activity.



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Witham Health Services gives Tips on how Healthier Habits are built from consistency, dedication and repetition.

Spring is a wonderful time to reflect as well as set goals and intentions for the upcoming year. What worked for you this year? What did not serve you well? What do you need more of in your life? What do you need less of? We all have our own unique physical, emotional and intellectual capacity. The challenge is knowing when to accept your limits and when to push yourself in each of these areas. To truly know your capacity, you have to become really in tune with your body and your emotions. When you have crossed the line of your limitations you will have signs. These signs include fatigue, irritation, overwhelm and unhappiness. It is important to know when you have breached your emotional and/or physical capacity. Pay attention! If you are working within your capacity, well done! It's not easy. If you are struggling right now, it's ok. We all thought 2020 was difficult, but 2021 and 2022 were as challenging or more challenging for so many of us. Know that brighter days are coming and blessings are all around. Focus on the blessings. Here are a couple quotes that might speak to you right now *"If you could see the size of the blessing coming, you would understand the magnitude of the battle you are fighting."* and *"Sometimes life is so hard you can only do the next thing. Whatever that is, just do the next thing. God will meet you there."* -Elisabeth Elliot

When is the last time you heard someone say "My health got so much better when I stopped eating vegetables and increased my fatty, red meat consumption."? We can all agree.... plants deserve a prominent place on the plate! Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs and spices, and plant-based oils aids in overall better health. You might also have noticed increased plant-forward op-

tions **SPROUTING** up in grocery store aisles and on your favorite restaurant menus.

Contrary to restrictive diets, plant-forward eating has no rules. Instead, it acts as game plan to allow for personal food preferences. It's not easy to change habits all at once, but if you are looking to reduce your intake of animal-based foods and replace them with more plant-based fare, let us help!

Nutrition is "that thing" we all know we need to pay closer attention to. Eating healthy is very simple, but not easy. We all know what we shouldn't eat or foods that add no value to our overall health. We also know that knowing and **DOING** are two very different things.

Nutrition is the process of being nourished and giving the mind and body nutrients to grow, heal and self-correct. Since 1970 the average person in the U.S. has **over doubled** their daily calorie intake. Even with those extra calories, many of us are deficient in the necessary nutrients that keep the mind and body healthy. Primary deficiency occurs when the body lacks a specific nutrient like Omega-3 fats, vitamin C, calcium, magnesium or B vitamins. Secondary nutrient deficiency occurs when the body fails to absorb or utilize the food or beverage that has been consumed; the key word being food and beverage. The most important part of the digestive process is the absorption of nutrients into the body. Supplements are isolated nutrients and the body cannot process nutrients in isolation. We are a series of processes and systems that work together. Look to food, not a pill your neighbor or friend is selling.

What is your intention to eat healthier? You need something specific behind it. Lose weight, lower blood pressure, improve cholesterol, prevent cancer, more energy, better sleep, im-

80/20 SAMPLE WEEK

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST						
LUNCH						
DINNER						

proved mood? Did you know what we are eating now can determine our risk for depression **SIX** years from now?! It's a cumulative effect. We didn't get here overnight. Prepare to eat healthier!

Take a challenge to focus on eating high quality foods (superfoods) for 21 days straight. If 21 days seems too long, do it for 10 days consistently and I promise you **WILL** notice a difference. These superfoods are designed to help you achieve your goals and see maximum results. As you incorporate more superfoods and healthier upgrades, the less likely you are to overeat or feel the need to count calories; Quality over quantity. Most programs are focused on elimination and do not work! Small changes make a **BIG** impact. If you implement a change, make sure you can sustain that change for the rest of your life. Focus on getting more of the good stuff in and you'll eventually crowd the bad stuff out! Think of what you will eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Make a grocery list. Meal choices are based on food preferences.

Breaking old habits and creating new ones is hard. It takes determination and drive. It's the small steps every day that help to build good habits. The 21-Day Challenge is just the beginning. The goal is to eat more nutrient-dense foods. These are the foods we consider to be some of the "better"

and "best" foods to fuel your body. But why are these foods so great? They come from the source. The earth is our food source and includes only the purest forms of food. The farther you move away from the source, the more processed, unhealthy and expensive the food becomes. Go closer to the source when buying foods and beverages. When foods are processed over and over again, they begin to lose integrity and key nutrients can get lost along the way. Think an apple versus applesauce or apple juice. Your body is a natural living thing. Try fueling it with other living foods from the source! Another way to think of it is did this food come from a farm or a factory?

You decide what to fuel your body with. Every day we face temptation. It's hot outside; Time for ice cream? We're having dinner with friends; Multiple cocktails? How about burgers and hot dogs over the holiday? In isolated instances those treats aren't harmful. In fact, it's important to treat yourself from time to time! We can have ice cream, alcohol AND burgers; however, if these special treats become regular indulgences, we'll see bigger health issues down the line. **Build healthier habits.** One of the easiest ways to start taking control is cooking your own meals. Cooking is

SEE HABITS/5



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Witham Health Services shares 5 Pillars of Self-Care

Self-Care is utilizing adaptive and healthy ways to re-charge.

Breath work - We take 20,000-30,000 breaths per day. It's arguably the most underutilized tool in medicine. Breathing can calm your nervous system. There are over 200 different techniques to explore! Coherent breathing - one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. Alternate Nostril Breathing 5-15 minutes a day can improve parasympathetic tone. GREAT for anxiety. Resistance Breathing (Ujjayi Pranayama) constricting the back of your throat allowing some compression on your vagus nerve. The vagus nerve activates the body's relaxation response and helps regulate stress. Box Breathing or 4-7-8 Breathing where you inhale for a count of 4, hold for 7 and exhale for a count of 8. Take time to FOCUS on your breath today.

Sleep - Deep restorative sleep. Prioritize your sleep hygiene and your sleep rituals. Sleep is always first on our hierarchy of Wellness needs.

Nutrition - The medicine on your plate! Do not discount the power of the

foods you choose to consume each day. They are more powerful than you could possibly realize.

Exercise - Develop a routine just like taking your medicine or brushing your teeth. BDNF (basically fertilizer for the brain) levels are thought to rise with movement. Exercise has a protective effect against depression. Doesn't matter what style of exercise or movement you do, JUST DO IT.

Spirituality - Purpose, purpose, PURPOSE! Mindful meditation is a form of spirituality. Meditation is a practice to help transition your body and mind into a calm and relaxed state. Organized community and prayer. Conscious awareness. Living with purpose, balance, contentment and hope. It's so very important.

Trina Rose
Coordinator
Witham Wellness Program
Witham Health Services



HABITS

FROM PAGE 3

fun. It can be social. It's easy and it gives you complete control over what you're eating. If you can read, you can cook. It's that easy. Follow a recipe and try it out!

Food is one of our most powerful friends, or enemies! It affects our long-term health like nothing else. What we fuel our body with matters. It gives us energy, keeps us in balance and acts as medicine. Our body is constantly talking to us. Listen to it. We have all the power we need to feel our best. Food is the first step. Making a lifestyle change isn't easy. But as we

educate ourselves on the affects resting, eating and moving have on our health and as we build lasting habits, we begin taking control of how we want to live our lives. Change begins to happen and feeling powerful, optimized and our absolute best becomes second nature.

Do not discount the importance of habit building. Habits are built from consistency, dedication and repetition. These are general terms we all know and understand. They are large things that can be hard to sustain. Is there a simple formula or system and strategy to help these big things become small and steady steps toward better health? We encourage every-

one to find what works for them. To mold this challenge and this budding lifestyle into a pattern that works for them. We all have different schedules, different obstacles and different goals. A guide we can give that anyone can build their change around is the 80/20 rule.

The 80/20 is not about being perfect nor is it meant to be restrictive. The 80/20 rule is a range or guideline to follow: 80 percent of the time you are focused and dialed in, and 20 percent of the time you can take a few liberties whenever you feel the need. If you want a beer or glass of wine, dessert, or whatever you're craving, there's nothing wrong with enjoying it. Let go

of the guilt! Food is an experience and it's meant to be enjoyed in every way.

In the sample week above, four of the meals are colored red. This is to represent the 20 percent of the week where liberties can be taken. Find which days and meals work for you! Make it a habit.

Trina Rose
Coordinator
Witham Wellness Program
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Witham Health Services shares ways to get your routine back

Are you feeling stuck or in limbo lately? You are not alone. Languishing seemed to be the mood of 2021 and it's carrying into 2022. Languishing is apathy, a sense of restlessness, feeling unsettled or overall lack of interest in life or the things that typically bring you joy. It isn't burnout or depression, you still have energy and hope, just have lost that joy and flow you used to experience. Maybe even a sense of stagnation and emptiness? Languishing is a series of emotions, not a mental illness. However, individuals with a history of depression and anxiety or who are generally predisposed to psychiatric conditions are more prone to languishing than others. Pile on our feelings of waiting, not having control

over what the present looks like or what the future will bring. You might not feel good or bad, just not present or focused and simple tasks may seem draining. It can be different for everyone, but similar all the same. Languishing is the void between depression and flourishing. It's the emotional toll of the pandemic. Sound familiar? If so, here are some tips to get back into your rhythm or flow...

1. **Give Yourself Some Time Off Or Uninterrupted Time** - Give yourself the proper free time to relax and recover. Disconnect on your days off.
2. **Do Things You Enjoy** - Try not to focus on what you "should" do. Find things that bring you joy or

that you've been wanting to explore.

3. **Change Your Scenery** - Get outside on your lunch hour. Rearrange your home or office. Go to a park for a hike. Find a museum to wander around.
4. **Focus On Small Goals** - Carve out daily time to focus on something that matters to YOU. Meal-prep, pray, exercise, clean out your closet, put your laundry away.
5. **Find YOUR Flow** - That space where your sense of time, place and self melts away. Where you are immersed in what you are doing. You are focused and in a rhythm.

It all starts with getting your routine back. One day at a time! Good mornings turn into good days. Good days turn into good weeks. Good weeks turn into good months. Good months turn into good years. Good years turn into a good life! It all starts with a GOOD MORNING! How are you making your mornings good?

Trina Rose
Coordinator
Witham Wellness Program
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Witham Health Services... Why “Gut” is the new buzz word right now.

The gut has been referred to as the second brain. Hippocrates said “All disease begins in the gut”. Sixty percent of your immune system is IN YOUR GUT. Which makes sense why it is such a buzz word right now! It turns out the microbiome is likely the most important regulator of our overall health.

Steps to better Gut Health:

1. Balance the nervous system: thoughts, stress, emotion, joy, gratefulness
2. Cut the processed, sugary, fake foods. Remove sugars, artificial sweeteners, heavily starchy foods, gluten and wheat (if you suspect they are causing issues for you) and the foods with a

long list of ingredients that you cannot pronounce!

3. Chew your food. SLOW DOWN while eating. Think about the nutritional content of the foods you are ingesting regularly.
4. Hydration. Drink half your bodyweight in ounce of water each day.
5. Superfoods! Pre and probiotic foods such as garlic, onions, avocados, green leafy vegetables, tempeh, sauerkraut, miso and kimchi.
6. Sunshine! Try to get 15 minutes of sunshine daily.
7. Movement. Exercise, take a walk, stretch, incorporate more movement into your workday!

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Four Things Happy People Do Every Morning:

1. They don't hit the snooze button
2. They exercise early on in the day
3. They eat a healthy breakfast
4. They start their day with an affirmation (“I am doing my best every day” “I love myself for who I am” “I am in charge of my own happiness” “I am grateful for every day”)

Mood Boosting Foods:

Zinc: oysters, crab, lobster, kale, broccoli, legumes and nuts
Magnesium: fish, avocados, dark green leafy vegetables, pumpkin seeds, almonds and cashews

Vitamin B: asparagus, dark green leafy vegetables, meat and avocado
Omega-3 Fatty Acids: wild caught salmon, sardines, flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts

Probiotic-Rich Foods: kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, pickles and miso
Trina Rose
Coordinator,
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Better Oral Health May Help Protect Your Heart

(Family Features) Many people are aware healthy habits like regular exercise and eating nutritious foods promote better heart health. However, it's lesser known that your oral health and heart health risk may be connected. In fact, a study from "Inside Dentistry" suggests as many as 50% of heart attacks may be triggered by an oral infection.

While research continues to fully understand the relationship between oral hygiene and cardiovascular health, studies have revealed correlations between the two. For example, according to a study published in the "European Journal of Preventive Cardiology," patients with improved oral hygiene had a lower risk for atrial fibrillation and heart failure compared with those with poor oral hygiene.

What's more, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, by age 34, approximately 50% of

people have experienced periodontal disease, which suggests a high percentage of the population could benefit from improved oral hygiene and preventative care.

"Given the prevalence of poor oral hygiene in the U.S., understanding the crucial link between oral health and heart health is a game-changer in developing treatment plans," said Dr. Eric Goulder, founder of the Heart Attack and Stroke Prevention Center of Central Ohio.

To help protect your oral and heart health, consider these tips from Pro-Biora Health, a leader in oral-care probiotics:

Think of your care providers as a team. This means sharing your health conditions with your dentist and your dental concerns with your doctor. While each specializes in different aspects of your health care, when everyone involved is aware of potential

problems, they can help you create a proactive care plan.

Practice good oral health habits. If you don't already have regular oral hygiene habits, it's never too late to start. Brush at least twice a day and after every meal, if possible. Flossing daily can also help remove plaque and trapped particles between teeth.

Protect your mouth with probiotic bacteria daily. In addition to brushing and flossing, add beneficial bacteria (probiotics) by taking an oral care probiotic to balance the natural bacteria load in your mouth. Used daily, an oral care probiotic lozenge can effectively replenish the good bacteria naturally found in the mouth, crowding out harmful bacteria that can cause plaque, gum disease, cavities and inflammation. For example, when [Pro-Biora Health probiotics](#) dissolve in the mouth, saliva hydrates the probiotics, which migrate to mouth tissue, gums,

gum pockets and tooth surfaces where they work to reduce bad bacteria.

Schedule regular preventive care. Visiting your dentist regularly can help manage potential problems before they become major concerns. Most dentists suggest scheduling checkup and cleaning appointments every six months. When using oral care probiotics, your checkup may go better than expected.

Don't wait to take action. If you notice any concerning symptoms that could be an indication of an oral health problem, schedule an appointment immediately rather than waiting for your next checkup. Possible concerns could include signs of infection such as red, swollen or sore gums; bleeding when you brush, floss or eat; an unexplained bad taste in your mouth; or problems with bad breath.

Learn more about protecting your oral health at probiorahealth.com.

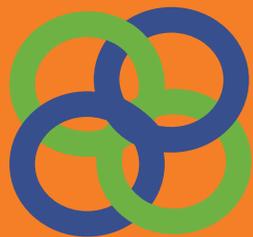
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How to Choose Quality Vitamins and Supplements

(Family Features) More than half of Americans take an over-the-counter vitamin or dietary supplement, but many may not realize that the quality of these products can vary greatly. Because supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration like other medicines, not all are quality products. When choosing a vitamin or other supplement, checking for independent verification can help ensure quality.

A recent study in the “Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine” found that the amount of actual melatonin in 71% of supplements is off by a 10% margin, meaning that labels of many melatonin substances do not accurately reflect how much melatonin is in the pill. The study also found the amount of melatonin within pills in a single jar can vary by 465%. This incident illustrates the value of verification, which confirms what is on the label is what is in the bottle.

Measures of Quality

The following are some of the characteristics to consider when evaluating the quality of a dietary supplement:

- **Positive Identification:** There are products on the market that do not contain the ingredients indicated on the label. Tests by an independent third party can confirm that what is on the label is in the bottle.
- **Potency:** It is crucial that ingredients are present in the right amount. Too little may have no effect on your health, while too much may be harmful.
- **Purity:** Unwanted ingredients can have a negative effect on health. Examples may include heavy metals, mold or mildew, and chemicals from pesticides.
- **Performance:** A pill or tablet must properly dissolve, or else ingredients cannot be absorbed by the body. In that case, it is more likely to pass through your system without any effect on your health.



- Another example is saw palmetto extract, a supplement commonly used to support prostate health and help to reduce frequent urination. Studies indicate that not all saw palmetto products are the same. Differences in purity, potency and quality among the various available saw palmetto products are thought to affect the usefulness of these supplements.

“As with any supplement, a consumer should look for the most reliable option,” said Ed Wyszumiala, head of the Dietary Supplement Verification Program at U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP). “Only consistent and quality saw palmetto extracts have been shown to be effective based on clin-

ical research. Therefore, consumers seeking a quality dietary supplement can feel confident choosing products with third-party verification, such as [Flomentum](#), the only saw palmetto extract supplement that has been independently verified by USP.”

How to Make Supplements Part of a Healthy Daily Routine

Following a few simple guidelines can make it easy to include supplements as part of your daily routine.

Talk with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any supplements, as they may interact with your prescription medications.

Do your homework on the manufacturer to make sure it is a reputable company that adheres to good manufacturing practices and does not appear to be the subject of fre-

quent consumer complaints.

Avoid companies making questionable claims about curing diseases and do your research on the science behind the products.

Carefully follow the directions on the labels, so you take the supplement exactly as intended.

Tests by an independent third party can confirm that what is on the label is in the bottle. Learn more about quality supplements and check whether your products are USP Verified at Quality-Supplements.org/Verified-Products.

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Don't Be Shy About Discussing Constipation With Your Doctor

(StatePoint) Constipation is something that most people have likely experienced at one time or another. For some people however, symptoms can occur over the long term.

Symptomatic individuals and patients should learn more about two types of long-term constipation: Chronic Idiopathic Constipation (CIC) and Irritable Bowel Syndrome with Constipation (IBS-C). While CIC and IBS-C share many of the same symptoms, there are important differences between the two.

One in seven U.S. adults have CIC and those with this condition may experience:

- Infrequent bowel movements (BMs)
- Hard-to-pass BMs
- Straining
- Discomfort
- Not feeling empty after a BM

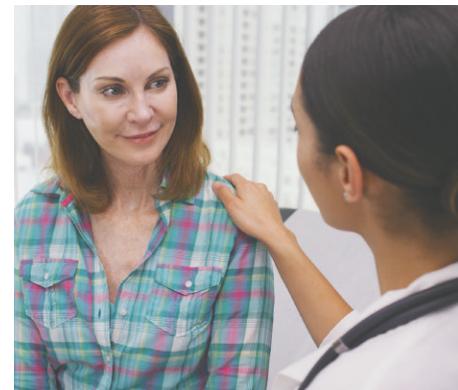
In addition to symptoms of CIC, patients with IBS-C also experience abdominal pain related to changes in bowel movements, and one in 20 U.S. adults are living with this chronic condition.

The causes of CIC and IBS-C are not known. That said, for some, the cause could be linked to changes in the connections between the brain and the gut.

If you're experiencing constipation, you should consider speaking to your doctor who may help address your symptoms.

Your physician can diagnose your condition and offer treatment options that may provide relief. Ask your health care provider the following questions during your next office visit:

- What are my options if lifestyle changes and over-the-counter medications haven't worked?



- How many bowel movements should I be having each week?
- What consistency should they be?

It's also helpful to go to your appointment prepared to share what symptoms you're experiencing and how long you've been trying to manage them. You might also be asked to identify what type of stool you most frequently experience when you are not taking medication using the Bristol Stool Form Scale. The Bristol Stool Form Scale is a visual representation of the seven types of BMs that you can have.

While it might seem awkward to talk about, telling your doctor which type or types of stool you typically have can help you both create a treatment plan that works for you and your body. The good news is that now more than ever, it is possible for a doctor to evaluate your symptoms and diagnose IBS-C and CIC during a virtual visit, so take advantage of telehealth appointments.

To learn more about the difference between IBS-C and CIC and for additional resources, visit ConfrontConstipation.com.

If you are experiencing constipation, you are not alone. Constipation is not only common, it's treatable.



How to Safely Dispose of Used Household Needles and Medical Sharps

(Family Features) When it comes to disposing used household medical needles or sharps, safety is the point. Every day, millions of people around the United States use needles, lancets and syringes - otherwise known as sharps - to manage health conditions like diabetes, arthritis, cancer or auto-immune diseases from the comfort of their own homes or while on the go. Some commonly used medical sharps include:

- Needles - fine, slender, hollow pieces of metal, typically attached to syringes, used to inject medication under the skin or withdraw fluid from the body
- Lancets, also called “finger-sticks” - often used by people with diabetes to get drops of blood for testing
- Auto injectors, including epinephrine pens - syringes pre-filled with fluid medication de-

signed to be self-injected into the body

- Infusion sets - tubing systems with needles used to deliver drugs to the body
- Connection needles - needles that connect to a tube used to transfer fluids in and out of the body

Managing a health condition can be overwhelming enough, so learning how to dispose of used household sharps may not be top of mind for those who use them.

Even for sharps users looking for safe disposal resources, finding state or local regulations can be challenging, but safely disposing of household sharps is an important issue and can help prevent injury.

A resource like [SafetyIsThePoint.org](https://www.safetyisthepoint.org) provides consumers with free resources and up-to-date information about how to safely dispose of their

household used sharps. This resource helps connect sharps users with safe disposal options across the United States and offers state-specific disposal guides.

“Our years of research have shown that people want to do the right thing with their used household sharps, but they did not know where to turn for guidance,” said Bruce Taylor, senior director of government affairs and market access at Dexcom, one of the companies that supports the free public education resource. “[SafetyIsThePoint.org](https://www.safetyisthepoint.org) takes the guesswork out of household sharps disposal by giving consumers easy instructions no matter where they live or travel.”

People who use sharps can often dispose of them at home. It’s as simple as 1-2-3:

1. Place used household sharps in a strong, plastic container like a laundry detergent or bleach

bottle.

2. When the container is 75% full, seal it tightly with duct tape and label it “do not recycle.”
3. Place the sealed container in regular household trash.

People in most areas of the United States can follow the steps above. In states or counties that do not allow household disposal, sharps users can use the ZIP code search function at [SafetyIsThePoint.org](https://www.safetyisthepoint.org) to find local drop-off locations, such as household hazardous waste collection centers and drop boxes or supervised collection points.

To learn more about disposing of used needles and sharps safely, visit [SafetyIsThePoint.org](https://www.safetyisthepoint.org).

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Take Charge of Risk Factors Impacting Heart Health

(Family Features) Cholesterol - a waxy substance created by the liver or consumed from meat, poultry and dairy products - isn't inherently "bad" for you. In fact, your body needs it to build cells and make vitamins and other hormones. However, too much "bad" LDL cholesterol, or not enough "good" HDL cholesterol, can pose problems.

High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Because it typically has no symptoms, you may not know you have high cholesterol until it's causing problems.

Knowing key health numbers like blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol, and working closely with your doctor to manage them, are keys to preventing heart disease and stroke.

Those who have already experienced a heart attack or stroke or have family history of cardiovascular disease, chronic inflammatory disease or kidney disease may need to have their cholesterol and other risk factors checked more often and may need medication to manage their conditions to prevent another event. According to the American Heart Association, as many as 1 in 4 survivors will have another heart attack or stroke.

Along with taking medication as prescribed, some lifestyle habits can help manage your risk and help you live a longer, healthier life like watching what you eat, getting more exercise and managing stress.

Make Healthy Menu Choices

A healthy eating plan is a well-rounded diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables (at least 4-5 servings each day). In fact, researchers at the University of Columbia found each daily serving of fruits or vegetables was associated with a 4% lower risk of coronary heart disease and a 5% lower risk of stroke.

Other smart choices for your menu include nuts and seeds, whole grains, lean proteins and fish. Limit sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and fatty or processed meats.



Get Moving

You likely know exercise is good for you, but an Oxford University study revealed simply swapping 30 minutes of sitting with low-intensity physical activity can reduce your risk of death by 17%. Mortality aside, in its Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted physical activity offers numerous benefits to improve health, including a lower risk of diseases, stronger bones and muscles, improved mental health and cognitive function and lower risk of depression.

The greatest impacts come from getting the recommended amount of activity: at least 150 minutes of moderate activity, 75 minutes of vigorous

activity or a combination of those activities per week. Be sure to discuss with your doctor which activities may be best for you.

Reduce Stress

Constant or chronic stress can have real consequences on both emotional and physical health. In fact, research shows chronic stressors like long work hours, financial stress and work-life conflict may be as risky for health as secondhand smoke, according to a report by the Behavior Science and Policy Association.

Aside from the toll on your body - including elevated risk for heart disease and stroke from high blood pressure, depression or anxiety - stress can lead to unhealthy habits like overeating,

physical inactivity and smoking.

Exercise is an effective way to keep your body healthy and release stress. You might also consider incorporating meditation and mindfulness practices into your day to allow yourself a few minutes to distance yourself from daily stress.

Research compiled by the American Heart Association suggests meditation can reduce blood pressure, improve sleep, support the immune system and increase your ability to process information.

Learn more about managing your cholesterol and habits to protect your heart health at heart.org/cholesterol.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images

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5 Easy Ways to Enhance Digestive Health

(Family Features) As your social schedule picks up steam and you attend more social gatherings and celebrations, you may find yourself with an unexpected issue: digestive troubles. Problems like this can have a negative impact on your overall wellness, so it's important to make healthy digestion a priority.

According to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian science of how to live long and be healthy, the health of the digestive system is the core of optimum health. Ayurvedic medicine asserts the digestive system is based on the strength and balance of its Agni (fire), which enables the body to absorb, digest and assimilate food. The teachings suggest an imbalanced Agni creates undigested residues, which form toxins that create imbalances and can lead to disease.

Some of the dietary guidelines for healthy digestion and strong Agni include:

- Allowing 4-6 hours between meals
- Avoiding eating between meals
- Avoiding foods with cold, wet and heavy qualities
- Drinking ginger tea or hot water to stimulate the Agni
- Starting a meal with pungent (hot), sour and salty flavors
- Consuming a small amount of bitter taste before a meal to increase the production of hydrochloric acid in the stomach

Take steps to protect and nurture your digestive health with these tips:

Add Fiber to Your Diet

Plant-based foods that are high in fiber fill you up faster, so you're less likely to overeat, and they also help with digestive regularity. Increase your intake of high-fiber foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds. Take a gradual approach to avoid upsetting your di-



gestive tract and bump up your water intake as you go since fiber will absorb it and decrease the likelihood you experience gas or cramping.

Stay Hydrated

Keeping your body well hydrated is like making sure your car's engine is well lubricated. It keeps all your mov-

ing parts in sync and operating for top performance. Some fluids can also help with detoxification, which can be especially beneficial when your social calendar is full and your opportunities to overindulge are greater.

An option like Buddha Teas' Detox Dharma contains detoxifying herbs that stimulate your digestive system.

Strengthening and soothing herbs are also incorporated into this balanced formula resulting in an effective yet gentle detox tea. For another solution, Turmeric Ginger Tea contains enough black pepper to make curcumin (the active ingredient in turmeric) bio-available in hot water, helping build healthy Agni.

Eat Slower

In today's busy world, it's easy to scarf down a meal in record time. However, slowing down gives your body more time to process food. You'll give your brain more time to communicate with your stomach and be more aware of when you've satisfied your hunger.

Start Exercising

If you need one more reason to get moving, your digestive health could be it. Regular physical activity promotes better digestion. However, if you jump into a workout too quickly after eating, you could actually do the opposite. Eat light before exercising then have a protein-rich balanced meal for recovery afterward.

Manage Stress

Too much stress can manifest multiple physical problems, including interrupting your digestion. Try mindful meditation or another method of relaxing and relieving stress. Getting plenty of rest can also help keep stress in check. If you're looking for a good night of sleep, consider Buddha Teas' CBD Sleepy Buddha Blend. Herbs for calming and relieving stress are paired with organic, water-soluble, THC-free CBD to leave you feeling restored and rejuvenated.

Find more solutions for enhancing your digestive health at buddhateas.com.

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How to Find the Right Doctor

(Family Features) Whether you're rarely sick or have conditions that require frequent visits to the doctor, having a trusted and skilled health care provider is an important step in protecting your health.

Any number of reasons can result in needing to find a new doctor, such as moving to a new community, changes to your insurance, your old doctor retiring or needing a specialist.

These suggestions from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) can help you be more efficient and thorough as you look for a doctor who is right for you.

Ask for Recommendations

Talk to people you know about whether they have a provider they like. If you're looking for a new provider because of a move or retirement, ask your current doctor for a recommendation. If you need to make a change with your primary care doctor but see specialists or other medical professionals you like and trust, you can also request referrals from them.

Check with Your Insurance Company

If you have health insurance, you may need to choose from a list of doctors in your plan's network. Some insurance plans may let you choose a doctor outside your network if you pay more of the cost.

To find a doctor who takes your insurance, call your insurance company and ask for a list of doctors near you who are in-network or use the insurance company's website to search for a doctor. It's also a good idea to call the doctor's office and ask for confirmation they take your plan. You should have your insurance, Medicare or Medicaid card handy in case the office needs your plan details.

Narrow Your Options

Some of the providers you consider may not be viable options for simple reasons, like their practice isn't currently taking new patients or they don't have office hours matching your schedule. You can also consider questions such as hospital affiliations and whether other providers can help if

you need emergency care and your doctor isn't available.

Take a Deeper Look

Online research can tell you a great deal about potential doctors, from biographical information and credentials to ratings by former patients.

When searching for a new provider, another important area to consider is financial relationships. One resource patients can consider is Open Payments, a national disclosure program within CMS that provides visibility into financial relationships between drug and medical device companies and physicians, and teaching hospitals. The government requires pharmaceutical companies, device manufacturers and group purchasing organizations to report funds they give health care providers in the form of meals, entertainment, travel, gifts, consulting fees, research payments and more, promoting transparency and helping uncover potential conflicts of interest.

It's important to know most health care providers receive payments. Just

because financial ties are reported does not mean anyone has done anything wrong. However, patients can use the information to talk with their provider about why they recommend certain medications or treatments, including asking about generic options, which are equally as effective as name brands but typically less expensive. It's also an opportunity to start a discussion with a provider about areas of professional interest and expertise based on research or consulting.

Listen to Your Gut

If you're undecided, request an introductory appointment with a provider you're considering. Look for a clinic where you are treated with respect and the medical team listens to your opinions and concerns. You should feel comfortable asking questions, and the doctor needs to be able to explain things in ways you understand.

Find more resources for your health care needs at [cms.gov](https://www.cms.gov).

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Know Your Kidneys: How to prevent and manage kidney disease

(Family Features) You may not think much about your kidneys unless there's a problem, but they play a vital role in your health.

Your kidneys continually filter your blood to remove extra fluid and waste, which is released from the body as urine. They also help control blood pressure and keep bones healthy. Consider this information from Know Your Kidneys, an education campaign from the American Kidney Fund, Boehringer Ingelheim and Otsuka, to understand how your kidneys work, how to protect them and help prevent kidney disease, which has no cure.

What is kidney disease?

Kidney disease means your kidneys are permanently damaged and do not work as they should. This lets extra fluid and waste flow back into your bloodstream instead of leaving your body as urine.

An estimated 37 million Americans are living with kidney disease, and 1 in 3 adults is at risk for the disease, according to the American Kidney Fund. Kidney disease typically does not have any symptoms until the late stages, so most people do not know they have it.

Who is at risk?

Kidney disease doesn't discriminate; people of all backgrounds get it. However, multiple barriers contribute to inequity in kidney care, including systemic racial and ethnic biases, language and cultural differences and where a person lives. These barriers make it more likely for certain people's kidney disease to progress to kidney failure – the last stage of kidney disease. For example, Black Americans make up just 13% of the population, but they are 3.4 times more likely than white Americans to progress to kidney failure.

Other risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, hereditary causes or having a family history of the disease, being over the age of 60, obesity and smoking. Talking with your doctor about these risk factors is an important step toward managing your kidney



health. Being tested for kidney disease if you are at risk can help detect early problems.

What are the symptoms?

In the later stages of kidney disease, you may have symptoms like foot swelling, nausea and fatigue. Other potential symptoms include itching, muscle cramps, changes in urine output, loss of appetite, trouble catching your breath and problems sleeping.

Regular blood and urine tests can help monitor your kidney health. Ask your doctor to check your kidney function, and if the tests reveal concerns, work together to create a plan.

What are the treatment options?

There is no cure for kidney disease,

but you can take actions and medicines to manage your condition and possibly help prevent the disease from progressing to kidney failure. Depending on the specific cause of your kidney problems, your doctor may suggest controlling your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol; eating healthy; quitting smoking; and being more physically active and maintaining a healthy weight. Medicines can also help control kidney disease for people with diabetes.

If kidney disease progresses to kidney failure, dialysis or a kidney transplant is required to survive.

How to advocate for kidney health

Dawn Edwards was just 23 when she developed kidney failure, reinforcing

that kidney disease can affect anyone at any age. While Edwards juggles life with dialysis, she also regularly talks to newly diagnosed and high-risk patients.

"My advice is to learn as much as you can and have honest, frank discussions with your doctor," Edwards said. "Learn about your treatment options, including the side effects of medications, and lifestyle changes that can manage your diabetes and high blood pressure and ultimately slow or stop the progression of kidney disease."

For more information, visit [KidneyFund.org/KnowYourKidneys](https://www.kidneyfund.org/KnowYourKidneys).

Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Signs of Hearing Loss

- Inability to hear clearly, especially in noisy environments
- Frequent misunderstandings in conversation
- Frequent requests for clarification or repetition
- Need to see people talk
- Fatigue from straining to hear
- Dizziness, pain or ringing in the ears
- Avoidance of social situations
- Volume turned up on TVs and radios

If you or a loved one is experiencing the signs of hearing loss, seek help. Don't wait until it is too late. Have your hearing tested and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure you can hear the world around you.

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Mental Healthcare and You – Finding the Right Fit

(StatePoint) Searching for a mental health provider? You likely have questions.

Recent research from virtual care provider MDLIVE suggests that confusion around finding a mental healthcare provider is common. One in five surveyed said they were concerned about finding a provider match and 70% experience confusion and uncertainty about where to begin. The research also revealed that not everyone knows the difference between the various mental health professionals – psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, mental health coaches and others.

“Many people are ready to get depression, anxiety and stress under control by working with a mental health professional, but get bogged down right from the start. Confusion about selecting a professional that best suits their needs causes a lot of people to give up. That’s something we want to change,” says Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, who brings more than two decades of direct practice experience to her role as behavioral health medical director at MDLIVE.

To help you in your search, MDLIVE is answering some frequently asked questions:

When is it time to see a therapist? Mental healthcare is self-care that most everyone can benefit from. However, if your emotional state is interfering with your daily life, it’s definitely time to take action. Beyond the common signs of mental illness, such as sadness, drug and alcohol misuse, trouble sleeping and mood swings, Dr. Espada-Campos notes that there are some often overlooked signals that could indicate it’s time to seek treatment. These include withdrawing from loved ones, feeling fatigued, having a lack of motivation and frequently “zoning out.” She also notes that life



events such as decoupling, job loss or the loss of a loved one can often trigger the need for professional mental health support.

What’s the difference between therapists and psychiatrists? Psychiatrists and therapists can treat the same things, however, psychiatrists are medical doctors who can diagnose psychiatric conditions and prescribe medication, while therapists are licensed providers who can evaluate and support people with emotional or

behavioral health concerns through talk therapy.

What should one look for in a provider? Mental healthcare is highly personal and it’s essential that your provider is someone you can open up to, make progress with and not feel judged by.

A good place to start is by working with a provider who has experience treating patients like you.

Understand that you may not find the right therapist on your first try.

Dr. Espada-Campos encourages individuals to both trust their feelings in this regard and to take an active role in their sessions by asking questions like, “What can I do to help my treatment?” and “How can we work together to achieve my goals?”

Does insurance cover therapy? In recent years, many health plans and employers have acknowledged the importance of mental healthcare and have expanded the resources available to their members and employees. Check coverage details online or through the plan’s call center. Alternatively, you may wish to seek counseling through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP counselors can help with a variety of mental health concerns, however, members are typically restricted to a set number of sessions. If you’re suffering from a recurring mental health issue, check what options are available through your health plan.

Can therapists be seen remotely? Virtual care, an increasingly popular option, can provide private, convenient, quality care quickly, and is often offered by health plans. For example, MDLIVE’s platform makes it easy to search for a provider that meets your needs and to schedule an appointment with one of their psychiatrists or licensed therapists. MDLIVE is a covered benefit for more than 60 million Americans through health insurers such as Cigna, Aetna, certain Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, and many regional and local plans. To learn more or to register, visit www.mdlive.com.

Finding a mental healthcare provider can feel overwhelming. However, identifying what you want out of care and understanding the different treatments available can help demystify the process.

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Is Your Sleep Apnea Under Control?

(StatePoint) High-quality sleep is fundamental to your health and happiness. However, for the 10-30% of U.S. adults living with sleep apnea, a good night's rest is not guaranteed.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a respiratory condition where airways narrow during sleep, causing short periods when you're not breathing. Incredibly common, it's estimated that there are millions of Americans with undiagnosed and untreated sleep apnea. Uncontrolled sleep apnea is associated with a number of challenging symptoms, including Excessive Daytime Sleepiness (EDS). This symptom, which can linger even after one begins being treated for sleep apnea,

is often described as feeling excessively drowsy. If you experience EDS, you might even fall asleep when you shouldn't. For example, sleepiness at work or while you're watching kids, along with drowsy driving, could put you and others at an increased risk of accidents and injury.

Not everyone being treated for sleep apnea experiences complete symptom relief. This is why the American Lung Association, with support from Jazz Pharmaceuticals, is encouraging the public to recognize their own or a loved one's sleep challenges.

"The first step to better sleep is to share your unresolved symptoms with your healthcare provider. If you

are diagnosed with sleep apnea after participating in a sleep study, your doctor will work with you to manage the condition," says Dr. Atul Malhotra, a board-certified pulmonologist, intensivist and research chief of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine at UC San Diego.

Dr. Malhotra recommends setting up a follow-up appointment within three months after you begin treatment -- or sooner if problems arise, and then on an annual basis after that.

"Unfortunately, some patients continue to experience lingering symptoms," says Dr. Malhotra. "It's important to address these concerns with your doctor."

You'll know if your treatment is working based on how you're feeling. Are you less sleepy during the day? Do you have higher energy levels? Does your bed partner notice less snoring, gasping or sleep disruptions? To help your doctor understand what you're experiencing at your appointment, it's important to distinguish fatigue, which is a lack of energy, from sleepiness, which is an inability to stay awake.

For more information about sleep apnea and EDS visit lung.org.

Everyone deserves the benefits of high-quality sleep. If you have difficulty getting a good night's rest, be sure to talk to your doctor about your symptoms right away.

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6 Exercise Safety Tips

(Family Features) In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans are more aware of their health and wellness. Now, as social restrictions ease, you may find yourself stepping up your workouts, whether you're training for an event or working to improve your game in a recreational league.

Sprains, strains and injuries can happen to even the most seasoned athletes. When you're testing your limits, even a minor injury can alter your performance. Consider products and supports like these from the CURAD Performance Series product line, available at Walmart and Amazon, to help you get back in the game quickly and safely.

Find more resources to support your fitness journey at [CURAD.com](https://www.curad.com).

Keep Dirt and Germs Away

The more active you are, the harder it can be to find a bandage that stays with you all day or all game long. You can find serious staying power with [CURAD Performance Series Bandages](#), which come in a variety of shapes and sizes to conform to the body and are made to stand up to mud, sweat, friction and heat. The rugged, heavy-duty fabric offers flexible, breathable protection to help seal out dirt and germs, and the highly absorbent, colored wound pads are antibacterial to help prevent infection.

Spray Away Sore Spots

Controlling mild pain can help keep you at the top of your game, and a topical analgesic works fast to heal common pain brought on by fitness and exercise, such as pain in knees, feet, shoulders and backs. For advanced numbing support, [ActivICE](#) gel, roll-on and spray relieve soreness fast with ultra-strength 8% menthol that has anti-inflammatory properties to numb muscles pre-workout and relieve post-workout soreness. The gel also includes pharmaceutical-grade conditioners that moisturize for lasting protection and comfort to heal and relieve prolonged inflammatory pain.



Put Pain in the Past

When recovery becomes the name of the game and pain relief is needed after daily workouts or bodily injuries, home remedies like [CURAD Performance Series](#) small reusable hot or cold packs provide long-lasting chilling or heating relief for recovery from aches, pains and swelling. Cold packs work to heal bruises, reduce swelling and relieve headaches and general pain points while microwavable heat packs provide satisfying heat therapy to address sore and stiff joints, muscle cramps and tension.

Reduce Impact of Knee Strain

Weak, injured or arthritic knees can come from many sources, including tendonitis and a wide range of conditions that result in strain or overuse. An adjustable band can provide support for on-field sports and during workouts or

everyday activities. An option like the [CURAD Performance Series Knee Support](#) has a universal, adjustable design that fits either knee for most men and women. Its adjustable patella support pad fits a variety of knee shapes and sizes, and a special antimicrobial layer helps prevent stains and odor-causing bacteria.

Manage Pain and Relieve Pressure

If you participate in endurance and strength exercises or certain sports, you may ask a lot of your joints. Kinesiology tape can be configured a multitude of ways to help reduce pain and improve blood circulation, as well as relieve tension and pressure. Providing support and relief while active, [CURAD Performance Series Far Infrared Kinesiology Tape](#) features infrared technology, designed to absorb and redirect energy, and may be experienced as a

gentle radiant heat. The tape is latex free, hypo-allergenic and can be worn for multiple days, even when swimming or participating in water sports.

Control Back Strain

When your back is strained, your body and performance can suffer. A mild or moderate sprain can benefit from strong support and compression, such as the [CURAD Performance Series Back Support](#). The dual-pulley system provides quick, uniform, custom compression with an easy, one-hand pull and metal stays for added support across the lower back and abdomen. The soft, breathable material is discreet under clothing so you can wear it all day long and hardly notice it, and the adjustable design comfortably fits a wide variety of body types.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images (Man on bike)

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