



Health & Wellness

A guide to looking, feeling and living your best!



A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

GASCONADE
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Republican

June 28, 2023



Dos and don'ts of healthy weight loss



Maintaining a healthy weight promotes long-term health. Being overweight or obese are risk factors for various conditions, including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The World Health Organization reports that the worldwide obesity rate has tripled since 1975. In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults were overweight. Of these, more than 650 million were obese.

Health issues related to obesity are largely preventable. Losing weight in a healthy manner is essential for safe and lasting results. Individuals aspiring to lose weight can follow these guidelines on what to do and what not to do.

DO add lean protein sources to your diet. Healthline indicates the body burns calories when digesting and metabolizing protein, so a high-protein diet can help to shed up to 80 to 100 calories per day. Protein also helps you to feel full, reducing the propensity to overeat.

DON'T get hung up on numbers early on. The Centers for Disease Control and

See **Weight loss**, Page 3B

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13 essential vitamins the body needs

The human body is a marvel. When working correctly, the body automatically performs scores of metabolic functions. Individuals can facilitate the performance of those functions in various ways.

Careful consideration of what they put into their bodies is one way individuals can make things easier on their bodies. It is vital to supply the body with the nutrients it needs. This includes the essentials: A, C, D, E, K, and the eight B vitamins.

• **Vitamin A:** This vitamin helps ensure the health of the skin, corneas, lining of the urinary tract, lungs, and intestines. Vitamin A also helps protect against infection. It also is important for vision, as it improves vision in dim light.

• **Vitamin C:** Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, plays a vital role in immune system function, helping to protect cells from free radicals. Since the body cannot store vitamin C, it needs to be consumed daily.

• **Vitamin D:** Vitamin D assists in calcium and phosphorous absorption, which helps to keep bones and teeth strong. The body can produce vitamin D naturally by spending time in sunlight. That is why it's often called "the sunshine vitamin."

• **Vitamin E:** This vitamin maintains muscles and red blood cells. It also protects fatty acids.

• **Vitamin K:** Vitamin K is necessary for blood to clot and helps to keep bones and other tissues in the body healthy.

• **Thiamine (B1):** B1 is needed for metabolism and for nerve and heart function.

• **Riboflavin (B2):** Another important nutrient for metabolizing foods, B2 helps maintain healthy mucus membranes, such as those in the mouth and nose.

• **Niacin (B3):** This vitamin helps to release energy from food and keeps the nervous system healthy.

See **Vitamins**, Page 5B

Weight loss • from page 2B

Prevention advises that even modest weight loss of 5 to 10 percent of your total body weight is bound to produce health benefits, such as improvements in blood sugar levels, cholesterol and blood pressure. Start small and gradually build up.

DO eat at least four servings of vegetables and three servings of fruits daily. Produce contains an abundance of vital nutrients and is often fiber-rich and low in calories, which helps you to feel full.

DON'T overlook the impact of beverages on weight loss. The calories in sugary beverages, including some all-natural fruit juices, can add up quickly. Stick to water, tea or other unsweetened beverages to help with weight loss.

DO get moving more. The Mayo Clinic notes that while it is possible to lose weight without exercise, getting moving can help burn off the excess calories you can't cut through diet alone. Exercise boosts metabolism and benefits mood and strengthens muscles and the cardiovascular system as well.

DON'T go shopping while hungry. If you do, you may make impulse buys that compromise healthy eating plans.

DO speak with a doctor if you are vetting diet and exercise plans. A healthcare professional can assist you by indicating if a particular diet or fitness routine is acceptable for your age, goals and current health status.

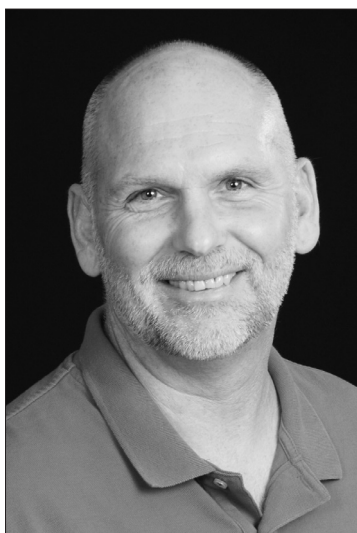
DON'T forget to track eating. Most healthy diets involve some sort of calorie-counting, whether they actually require you to document your intake or use a formula to attribute "points" or another measure related to what you eat. Writing or tracking the foods and beverages you consume will provide the most honest assessment of habits that could affect weight loss.

DO include foods you enjoy. Completely restricting access to occasional treats may cause you to resent healthy eating, which can derail weight loss goals. The principle of moderation can apply to healthy weight loss as long as you account for the more calorie-dense foods.

Losing weight in a healthy manner is achievable when you seek guidance and follow some time-tested techniques.

Tune Up Your Body For Better Health

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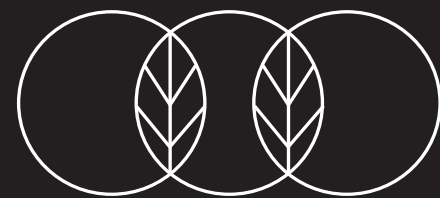
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Keep watching for additional services coming soon!

Did you know?

The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been studied in recent years, and the National Institutes of Mental Health notes that rates of anxiety, depression and substance abuse disorder have increased since the beginning of the pandemic. Though research into the link between COVID-19 and mental health is ongoing, the NIMH notes that people are more likely to develop mental illnesses or disorders in the months following infection. In addition, people diagnosed with long COVID, which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes is characterized by ongoing symptoms or health problems that can persist for weeks, months or even years after infection, may experience various symptoms related to brain function and mental health. Such symptoms, according to the CDC, may include difficulty thinking or concentrating, headache, sleep problems, lightheadedness when standing up, depression, or anxiety. Individuals who suspect they may be dealing with mental health issues are urged to speak with their physicians immediately. More information about COVID-19 and mental health is available at covid19.nih.gov.

What to do when migraines strike

Headaches may be a common nuisance, but that doesn't mean they share common characteristics. For example, migraine sufferers may attest that these headaches can be much harder to endure than others.

The health and wellness resource Healthline says a migraine is a neurological condition that typically causes painful headaches which are accompanied by other symptoms, such as sensitivity to smell, touch, light, and sound. Migraines also may produce numbness or tingling, visual auras and nausea/vomiting.

The American Migraine Foundation advises that migraine attacks feature distinct phases. Recognition and understanding of these phases can help to manage headaches more effectively. Some of the earliest signs of migraine include fatigue, blurred vision, auras, and other prodrome symptoms unique to people's migraine histories. These conditions can occur anywhere from a few hours to a few days before a migraine attack. It is important to note that symptoms may not occur with every migraine, nor will early symptoms always result in migraines.

Identifying potential migraine symptoms early may help a person reduce the severity of a migraine. Typically, the migraine headache stage can last for several hours or up to three days, says the AMF.

People identify migraine pain as pulsating, throbbing, pounding, perforating, and debilitating. Some have compared it to having an ice pick inserted into the head. The Mayo Clinic notes that these steps may help to reduce the severity of migraine symptoms.

- Find a calm environment away from stressors and the bustle of everyday life.
- Relax in a dark, quiet room as light and sound can exacerbate migraine pain.
- Small amounts of caffeine can relieve migraine pain in the earliest stages and enhance the effects of common OTC pain medications like acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Sip small amounts of caffeinated soda, tea or coffee. Don't overdo it, as that can lead to caffeine withdrawal headaches.

• Try to get

steady, uninterrupted sleep each night. Poor sleep may trigger a migraine. If you have difficulty sleeping, listen to soothing music, establish a bedtime routine, go to bed and wake up at the same times each day (even on weekends), and exercise regularly. Speak with a health care provider if sleeplessness is chronic.

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet at regular intervals. Fasting may contribute to migraine onset. Avoid foods such as aged cheese, alcohol and chocolate if they trigger your migraines.

- Try to manage stress in any way you can, which may include time management and simplifying your life. Delegate to others if you're taking on too much.

- Journal when migraine symptoms come on so you can determine if there is a trigger. Migraine headaches can interrupt life and prove debilitating. Finding relief takes patience. If home remedies do not suffice, people can speak to their doctors about possible medical therapies.



The link between viruses and cancer

Cancer is a prolific disease that does not discriminate based on age, gender or locality. Many people are aware that various environmental or genetic factors can raise their risk for cancer. However, some may be surprised to learn that certain viruses and other infections also can lead to cancer formation.

While certain viruses are responsible for the sniffles that come with the common cold, people do not often mention viruses and cancer in the same breath. Such individuals may be surprised to learn that some viruses actually can contribute to cancer, according to WebMD. Verywell Health notes that studies have found around 10 percent of cancer cases worldwide are caused by viruses, with the majority of these cases affecting people in developing countries. Viruses, like other

pathogens, are composed of genetic material that can invade host cells, causing genetic damage or mutation. Viruses also may alter the immune system so that it is less able to fight off cancer cells that may be present for another reason.

Viruses linked to cancer

Learning about viruses that can cause cancer can be an important component of preventive health care. The American Cancer Society says these viruses are linked to cancer in humans.

- Human papillomaviruses: This group of more than 150 viruses are implicated in the formation of genital warts as well as cervical cancer. HPV also can contribute to cancers of the penis, anus, vagina, vulva, and mouth and throat.

- Epstein-Barr virus: This virus is com-

monly linked to mononucleosis or "the kissing disease." It is a type of herpes virus. EBV infection can increase the risk of nasopharyngeal cancer, fast-growing lymphomas, and also Hodgkin's lymphoma.

- Hepatitis B and C viruses: Both HBV and HCV cause a type of liver infection and inflammation that can potentially lead to liver cancer. Some research also links HCV to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

- Human immunodeficiency virus: HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, isn't a direct cause of cancer, but infection can increase a person's risk of getting several types of cancer linked to other viruses. For example, HIV has been linked to higher risk of Kaposi sarcoma and cervical cancer.

Additional infections

Bacteria and parasites also can contribute

to cancer formation. Long-term infection of the stomach with *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria, for example, may cause ulcers and stomach cancer. *Chlamydia trachomatis* is a bacteria that affects women's reproductive systems and can increase risk for cervical cancer.

Certain parasitic worms that can live inside the human body also increase the risk of developing some types of cancers, such as those of the bile ducts and bladder. These are rare in North America, but may be contracted when traveling outside of the country.

Infections from viruses, bacteria and even parasites may lead to cancer in some people.

Vitamins • from page 3B

• **Pantothenic Acid (B5):** B5 is another vitamin that aids energy metabolism. It also plays a role in normalizing blood sugar levels.

• **Pyridoxine (B6):** People rely on B6 to metabolize food energy. It also has a role in proper nerve function and helps in the creation of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen around through red blood cells.

• **Biotin (B7):** This is only needed in small amounts to make fatty acids. .

• **Folate (B9):** Folate is very important for healthy red blood cells. Folate also helps to prevent birth defects, which is why it is recommended as a prenatal vitamin. The manufactured form of folate is called folic acid.

• **Cobalamin (B12):** B12 is needed to make red blood cells, DNA, RNA, and myelin for nerve fibers.

It is preferable to obtain vitamins through healthy foods. If and when foods are inadequate, supplementation might be recommended.

Certain vitamins are fat-soluble, which means they are stored in the body's fat and used slowly over time, according to WebMD. Others are water-soluble, so they are not stored and need to be replenished frequently. Individuals should speak to their doctors and nutritionists about any vitamin deficiencies they may have and how to combat them safely.



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FOR YOUR HEALTH

Ten sun safety tips for summer fun

If all the picnics, barbecues and trips to the park didn't give it away, summer is now officially in full swing, and for many of us that means getting outside to enjoy the long days and warm weather.

It should also mean remembering to protect our skin from the sun's damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays. Being sun-safe can help avoid sunburns, slow down skin aging and lower the risk of skin cancer,

including serious melanoma. And while that message can seem second nature at this point, the reality is that many of us — maybe most of us — still have steps we could take to improve our sun safety. The basics are pretty simple: Find shade, use sunscreen and wear sun-safe clothes. But some extra tips can really help us put these into practice:

1. Be ready for the sun. Most of our trips outside are planned — at least to some extent — so we have time to get ready with sunscreen and the correct clothing. But,



by **Dr. Graham Colditz**
Siteman Cancer Center

it's summer after all, and that can mean spur of the moment trips outside for a lunchtime walk, a concert at the park or just to get a breath of fresh air. So, it's good to try to keep a hat, long-sleeve shirt and small tubes or sticks of sunscreen at the ready. They don't take up too much space and can easily fit in the side pockets of a backpack, in a desk drawer, locker or somewhere in the car.

2. Use enough sunscreen (we often don't). Using sunscreen is great. Using enough sunscreen is even better. Many of us fall short of the recommended amounts to get good protection. When you're at places like the park or pool, you should typically use one full ounce, which fills the palm of the hand.

3. Use a sunscreen with 50 SPF or higher if you're outside longer. When out for short periods of time, sunscreens with 30 SPF (sun protection factor) can be good choices, but

if you're going to be out for longer, try to use sunscreens with 50 SPF or higher, which provide great protection.

4. Apply. Repeat. Unfortunately, one application of sunscreen doesn't last all day. To get good protection, it generally needs to be re-applied around every two hours, or sooner if you've been in the water or sweating.

5. Remember the ears — and other easy-to-miss spots. Don't rush putting on sunscreen. Take the time to cover as much exposed skin as possible. Pay attention to those places we can sometimes forget, like the tops of the ears, feet and head (if thinning hair).

6. Get kids sun-ready first. Before the adults head outside, first get kids sun-ready. Sun exposure in youth is especially important when it comes to the risk of skin cancer later in life. Focusing on kids first can help make sure they're as protected as possible for fun in the sun.

7. Plan your shade. Being under shade is one of the simplest ways to protect ourselves from the sun's damaging rays. If there aren't sun shelters or trees available, having your own canopy, tent or large umbrella can be a great back-up plan, and there are many good,

affordable options these days.

8. Try UPF-rated clothes. Clothes made from fabrics with a UPF rating (ultraviolet protection factor) can be a great choice for summer, helping to block UV rays while also being lightweight and made for outdoor activities. As with sunscreen, the higher the number, the better the sun protection.

9. Don't forget sunglasses. It's important to protect your eyes along with your skin. Keep a pair of sunglasses as part of your sun-safety gear. Look for those with "100% UV protection" and don't let the darkness of the lenses or price tag be your marker for UV protection. Check tags and labels to be sure.

10. Work toward a sun-safe community. There are steps we can take to help make it easier for the those in our communities to be sun safe, and it doesn't need to take a lot of time or effort. Send an email to the city council about getting more shade at playgrounds, or start a social media string about adding sunscreen dispensers on bike paths and at ballparks. Even small changes can make an important difference.

Now, let's get out and enjoy those great summer days — safely.

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If you have an ongoing health condition — like diabetes or heart disease — getting vaccinated is especially important. Vaccines can protect you from serious diseases (and related complications) so you can stay healthy as you age.

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Hospice nurses provide care during some of life's toughest moments

Coping with terminal illness can be challenging, even for those people with immense support systems behind them. At some point in one's care plan, it may be recommended to transition from actively treating or trying to cure a condition to making the person more comfortable. This is when hospice steps in.

Generally speaking, hospice is reserved for people who expect to die from an illness within the next six months. Hospice care can take place in a health care setting or in a person's private home. Hospice nurses are vital parts of a hospice care team. These people care for those who have opted for hospice at the ends of their lives and fulfill the hospice philosophy of comfort and quality based on each person's unique needs.

According to Samaritan Life-Enhancing Care, a hospice nurse serves many purposes. A hospice nurse discusses and explains the patient's prognosis, and performs assessments and reviews medical histories. The nurse will administer medication for pain and monitor conditions and additional needs. Hospice nurses work to support the family and advocate for care according to the patient's wishes.

They also can answer questions and address concerns, serving as sounding boards in difficult situations. Hospice nurses also provide emotional support and can facilitate spiritual support. Nurses also may be present at the time of death if asked. Hospice nurses also may help coordinate counseling for surviving family members who are experiencing grief.

Hospice nurses may be classified as intake admissions, case managers, visit nurses, and triage nurses. One or more hospice nurses will be involved with patient care over the course of treatment.

Most hospice care providers are Certified Hospice and Palliative Nursing Assistants or Certified Hospice and Palliative Licensed Nurses. It is important for people considering hospice care nursing to determine the certification and coursework necessary for a career in the field. Families seeking hospice care needs should work with certified individuals.

It takes a compassionate person to work in hospice care. These invaluable individuals step in to offer assistance during trying times for individuals and their families.

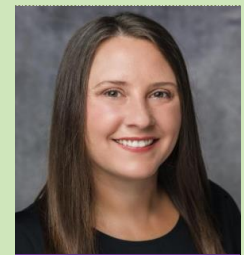
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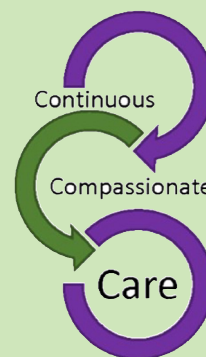
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OUR STORY

Community members realized that many patients in Franklin, Warren, Gasconade, and a portion of St. Louis county were in need of quality, compassionate hospice care services. New Haven Hospice Care was organized in June 2016 as a nonprofit company dedicated to providing continuous quality care to residents of New Haven and surrounding communities. The initial staff of five worked on securing accreditation, which was granted in December 2017.

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Living well with Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that can affect patients' lives in many ways due to its physical symptoms, which typically begin gradually and then worsen over time. Symptoms of PD can include everything from involuntary movements called "tremors" to stiffness and difficulty balancing and walking. The National Institute on Aging says as the disease progresses, people may experience mental and memory issues and exhibit difficulty speaking.

Sometimes PD can affect a person's ability to engage in ordinary daily activities. Things that once came easily, such as dressing, eating and sleeping, may become more challenging. Living successfully after a Parkinson's diagnosis requires adjusting to changes as they come.

Learn all you can

After a PD diagnosis, it's important patients learn as much as possible about the condition. Everyone experiences medical issues in different ways, so there is no uniform way that the human body responds to PD. However, there are some commonalities, and awareness of what may occur can remove some of the surprises.

Choose your care team wisely

It certainly can take a village for you to manage PD. One of the first steps is finding competent doctors and allowing caring friends and family who have your best interests at heart to pitch in. As a person with PD, you'll need support. That can include medical teams who prescribe the best medications to help manage symptoms and therapists who can help you

through frustrations. Friends and family may have to assist with certain tasks, including running errands and helping keep your home clean.

Keep safety in mind

Speak with a doctor about situations when your safety can be compromised, particularly if you live alone. The Parkinson's Foundation reports that, as the disease progresses, people with PD may experience "freezing" episodes. Freezing is a temporary situation where you will not be able to move. These episodes cause increased risk of falling. Episodes may only last a few seconds, but they are a potentially dangerous symptom of PD.

Additional safety concerns may involve walking without assistive devices or knowing when to give up driving. It's also good to get a medical alert band so, in the case of an emergency, first responders will be aware you have PD.

Plan ahead

While it may initially seem you will need to stick closer to home, this isn't always the case. Ask your neurologist to provide names of caregivers in areas where you would like to travel for business or vacation. Also, the Parkinson's Foundation Helpline (800-4PD-INFO) can help you locate local resources, such as exercise classes, activities and support groups.

Parkinson's disease can be challenging, but most people learn ways to manage its symptoms so they can continue to live fulfilling lives.

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How to establish fitness goals for kids

Physical activity benefits people of all ages, including kids. Despite widespread recognition of the positive impact physical activity has on children, many kids are not getting enough exercise. In an analysis of data collected as part of the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that less than one in four children between the ages of six and 17 participates in 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

When established in childhood and adolescence, good habits like exercising regularly can set young people up for a long, healthy life. Perhaps in recognition of that, parents often look for ways to promote physical activity to their youngsters. Setting fitness goals is one way to help young people exercise more, and the following are a handful of strategies parents can try as they seek to promote a love of physical activity in their children.

- **Include fun activities in a fitness plan.** Adults recognize the importance of planning when aspiring to achieve certain goals, and a plan can be just as integral to getting kids to be more physically active. When devising a fitness plan, parents should be sure to include activities kids find fun. Just because Dad liked playing baseball doesn't mean his children will. Identify activities that kids enjoy, whether it's hiking or cycling or playing an organized sport, and include that in the fitness plan.

- **Involve kids' friends.** Parents often make exercising a family affair, but a 2015 study led by a researcher affiliated with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center found that children who exercised with friends were far less likely to cite barriers such as lack of enjoyment or lack of energy as reasons for not exercising. In essence, kids are more inspired to exercise with friends than they are with family members. When establishing fitness goals for kids, parents can work with other parents so kids can pursue those

goals together, increasing the chances that those pursuits will be successful.

- **Set aside time to exercise each day.** Physical activity should be part of everyone's daily routine, and kids are no exception. Such activity does not need to be a grueling workout, and indeed children's bodies will need time to recover after especially strenuous exercise. But setting aside time each day to be physically active is a good way to ensure kids' lifestyles are not predominantly sedentary.

- **Make the goals attainable.** Parents may know before kids begin exercising or notice shortly after they start being more physically active how much kids can reasonably handle. The YMCA notes that's an important factor to consider, as fitness goals should be attainable so anyone adjusting to a new regimen, even kids, stays motivated. A child's pediatrician can advise on how much exercise youngsters should get each day, and parents can help kids gradually reach that point by setting challenging but attainable goals.

Regular physical activity can benefit kids for the rest of their lives. Parents can pitch in by embracing various

strategies to help kids establish attainable goals that make fitness fun.



Potential dangers of mixing herbal and prescription meds

Medications improve the lives of billions of people across the globe every day. Without access to medication, millions may die while countless others would experience a dramatic decline in their quality of life.

Though there's no denying the positive effects of medication, the efficacy of herbal supplements and prescription drugs does not mean each are risk-free. Risks may even be compounded when individuals take herbal supplements and prescription medications concurrently. According to the Mayo Clinic, herbal supplements do not always interact well with prescription medications. For example, herbal supplements can interact with medicines utilized to treat issues affected the heart and blood vessels. That includes conditions like high blood pressure, which estimates from the World Health Organization indicate affects nearly 1.3 billion adults between the ages of 30 and 79.

Mixing medications has always been risky, but a growing reliance on herbal medicines has potentially elevated that risk. That's perhaps due to perceptions of herbal supplements as wholly natural, leading some



to conclude that a substance that's wholly natural cannot jeopardize the human body. However, an analysis published in the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology detailed more than a dozen instances of adverse drug reactions affecting individuals who took herbal medicines alongside various prescription medications. The medications

taken, some of which were antidepressants, were prescribed to treat various conditions, including HIV, epilepsy and heart disease.

The potential dangers of mixing herbal and prescription medications underscore the need to engage in honest and open discussions with a physician before taking any herbal or prescription medications. Individu-

als currently taking a prescription medication should consult with their physician before taking any herbal supplements, while those who take herbal medicines and supplements should bring that up with their physicians if they are prescribed a new medication.

What are some symptoms of herbal and prescription interactions?

The Mayo Clinic notes that a fast heart-beat and changes in blood pressure are two indicators of drug interactions. But many additional side effects can indicate a potentially dangerous or unhealthy interaction is taking place. For example, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration notes that increased dryness or irritation of skin when taking more than one topical acne drug at the same time indicates an unhealthy interaction is taking place.

Herbal and prescription medication interactions can be dangerous. Individuals are urged to contact their physicians before combining medications and to bring up their existing medication regimen whenever they are issued a new prescription.

What to know about cancers of the mouth

ancers of the mouth can affect anyone. The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research says oral cancer makes up an estimated 3 percent of all cancer diagnoses made in the United States each year, which equates to roughly 54,000 new cases.

Because the mouth is comprised of many different types of cells, there are various forms of oral cancer. Each type depends on which cells are affected. Here's a closer look at the different types of oral cancer.

Squamous cell carcinoma

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center says squamous cell carcinomas account for 90 percent of all oral cancers. Squamous cells are thin and flat and make up the tissues that form the surface of the skin. They're also found in the lining of hollow body organs and the respiratory and digestive tracts.

Verrucous carcinoma

This is a slow-growing cancer that is made up of squamous cells. It is a rare subtype of squamous cell carcinoma that only accounts for about 5 percent of oral cavity tumors, according to the City of Hope® cancer center.

Oral melanoma

Melanomas develop in melanin, which are the pigment-producing cells that color

the skin. Melanoma can occur anywhere on the skin, including inside the nose or mouth.

Lymphoma

Oral cancers also can affect lymph tissue. In terms of mouth cancer, lymphoid tissue can be found in the base of the tongue and in the tonsils.

While most mouth cancers are squamous cells, the cancer will be further classified depending on the exact location where it begins.

- **Buccal mucosa:** The buccal mucosa is the inner cheek tissue. Lumps in this area should be checked out by a doctor.

- **Gum cancer:** Gum cancer may be mistaken for gingivitis, but the two are not one and the same.

- **Mouth floor:** Cancer in the floor of the mouth occurs in the horseshoe-shaped area under the tongue.

- **Hard palate:** The hard palate is the roof of the mouth. This cancer often starts as an ulcer, according to MSKCC.

Oral cancers also can affect the lips, tongue and jaw.

Quite often dentists, who should inspect the mouth twice per year, are the ideal health professionals to detect oral cancers early



DENTISTS ARE instrumental in early detection of oral cancers.

on. Any abnormality in the mouth should be examined and addressed by a doctor. Risk factors for developing mouth cancers include smoking, drinking alcohol, using other tobacco products like chewing tobacco, and exposure to sunlight.

Individuals should be cognizant of oral cancers. Though oral cancers may not be as prevalent as other forms of the disease, they still pose a threat, especially when they are not detected in their earliest stages.

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How to protect long-term cognitive health

Cognitive health is not something to take for granted. Although a certain level of memory loss can be expected as people age, when the ability to clearly think, learn and remember is compromised, those changes can affect an individual's ability to perform daily activities and should serve as a cause for concern.

Brain health should be a priority for everyone. The National Institute on Aging says brain health is an umbrella term that encompasses a host of factors, including:

- cognitive health, which is how well you think, learn and remember
- motor function, or how you make and control movements
- tactile function, which is how you feel sensations; and
- emotional function, or how emotions are interpreted and responded to.

Individuals can safeguard brain health — particularly cognitive health — by taking these steps.

Be more health-conscious

Working with doctors, individuals can put their health first. This includes getting routine screenings, managing chronic health problems, limiting or avoiding alcohol and nicotine products, and getting the recommended amount of sleep each night.

Manage high blood pressure

All chronic conditions cause long-term repercussions, but the NIA indicates that observational studies show having high blood pressure in mid-life increases the risk of cog-



nitive decline later in life. Lowering blood pressure lowers the risk for mild cognitive impairment and possibly dementia.

Challenge your brain

Harvard Medical School says nurturing social contacts,

engaging in stimulating mental activities like reading and doing puzzles, seeing new places, and learning new things can help keep the brain in top form.

Manage stress

Stress can take its toll on the body, and there is reason to believe that it may adversely affect cognitive health as well. Make every stride to reduce stress, whether that involves taking vacations, meditating, laughing with friends and family, or engaging in relaxing activities that relieve stress.

Get enough vitamin D

Vitamin D is linked to a host health benefits, including its potential to promote a healthy brain. Individuals can get more time outdoors to get vitamin D naturally from the sun and eat foods rich in vitamin D. If doctors find that vitamin D levels are exceptionally low, supplementation can help.

Pay attention to hearing loss

Certain hearing loss has been linked to cognitive decline, says Healthline. Researchers in Italy concluded that people with central hearing loss had a higher risk of mild cognitive impairment than those with no hearing loss or peripheral hearing loss. Individuals with central hearing loss are urged to speak to their physicians to determine if they can take preventive action to stave off further decline.

Cognitive health should be a priority. Adults can employ various strategies to reduce their risk of cognitive decline as they age.

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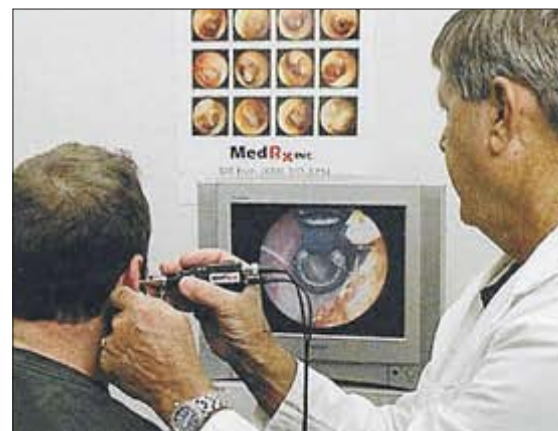


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