

Fall 2010

HealthHints

Managing Medications

Whether you take medications regularly or only occasionally, it's important to take steps to ensure each one remains safe and effective.

- Make sure medicines are stored properly. Avoid using the bathroom cabinet as the moist, warm air can cause medicines to lose their effectiveness more quickly.
- Keep medications in their original containers except when you use a day of the week pill organizer. Using a day/time pill organizer is a great way to help you keep track of each day's pill requirements.
- Check expiration dates regularly.
- Keep track of refill needs and reorder on time so you don't run out of a needed medication.
- Keep a checklist of all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you take. Include why you take each one, the dosage and time of day and any instructions. Keep this list with your medications and keep another one available to take with you to the doctor or pharmacist as needed.
- Review your medication list regularly with your doctor and pharmacist. Be sure you understand what the medication is, why you need it and how to take it. Ask about any possible interactions or side effects.
- Follow each medication's instructions carefully. Don't stop taking a medication - even if you are feeling better - unless your doctor says you should. If you don't think a medication is working or you have side effects talk with your doctor about alternatives.
- Get into a routine with your medications. For example, taking your morning pills right after you brush your teeth.
- Remember to keep medications out of reach of children and pets.
- Have the same drugstore fill all of your prescription and over-the-counter medications. This can help avoid drug interactions.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, www.nih.gov, American Heart Association, www.heart.org, Virginia Poison Center, www.vapoison.org



The Truth About Depression

Myth: Depression isn't very common. In fact, depression affects 10% of Americans. And nearly half of all college students report that at some point they've felt so depressed they've had trouble functioning. That means there's a good chance you or someone close to you could face depression at some point.

Myth: Depression is the same as feeling sad. In fact, clinical depression is much more than sadness. It's a very real and serious health condition with emotional and physical symptoms. Depression is characterized by prolonged periods of hopelessness, sadness, and a lack of interest in things once enjoyed. People with depression may have trouble sleeping or sleep too much, may find it hard to focus, be irritable and have aches and pains that don't go away.

Myth: If you are strong you can just "get over" being depressed. In fact, people with depression can't "get over" their health condition any more than someone with diabetes, asthma or another condition can just snap out of it. It is not a sign of weakness to have depression.

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Eight Foods to Eat

Eat your veggies. Choose whole grains. Don't forget fruit and dairy. While most of us have a general idea of what should be a part of a healthy diet, sometimes it's hard to know how to choose specific foods in each category. Next time you're making your shopping list, consider adding the eight foods below. Each provides a high-powered nutritional punch for your weekly meal planning rotation.

1. **Salmon** – Serves up lots of omega-3 fatty acid for heart health along with plenty of protein and iron.
2. **Spinach or other leafy greens** like kale, collards or Swiss chard - Packed with vitamins A, C and K, calcium, iron and fiber.
3. **Sweet potatoes** – Full of fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and potassium.
4. **Edamame (whole soybeans)** – Provide fiber, protein and a bonus of omega-3 fatty acids.
5. **Broccoli** – Rich in vitamins A and C. Plus vitamin K to help build bones.
6. **Blueberries** – Deliver antioxidants and plenty of fiber.
7. **Quinoa (Keen-wa)** – Provides an easy source of whole grain high in protein, fiber and iron.
8. **Unsweetened plain yogurt** – Packs calcium, protein, potassium, zinc and vitamins B-6 and B-12 into each serving.

Sources: Center for Science in the Public Interest, www.cspinet.org; WebMD, www.webmd.com

Depression *[continued from previous page]*

Myth: You can only get depressed if something bad happens in your life. In fact, developing depression doesn't require a negative event to occur. Depression can arise suddenly, even during times when life is going well.

Myth: Depression will eventually just go away on its own. In fact, without treatment, depression can continue for weeks, months or even years. And depression can also lead to suicide which is why it is so important to see a doctor if you suspect that you or someone you care for is depressed. Fortunately most people get better with treatment.

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov, National Institute on Aging, www.nia.nih.gov; Mental Health America, www.nmha.org

Protect Your Family With Back To School and Flu Vaccines

Back to School Vaccines

Because of vaccination programs, childhood diseases like polio and measles have become rare. In order to keep it that way, it's important to have children vaccinated on schedule. Several of these vaccines must be given to children before they can start school. Talk to your child's doctor about a recommended vaccination schedule.

The Flu Vaccine

The flu is a bad infection that can spread from person to person. Getting a flu vaccine is the best way to avoid getting the flu and giving it to family and friends. People in high risk groups or caring for someone in a high risk group should get a flu vaccine if it's medically appropriate.

Most people who get the flu are sick for one to two weeks, but some can get seriously ill or even die from complications. Those at greatest risk are women who are pregnant, young children, people who are older, smokers and people with health conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease.

Because the flu changes each year, you must get a new shot annually to be protected. That means, even though you got a flu shot last year, you need one this year. New this year, the annual flu vaccine will include protection for H1N1.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov; National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, www.nfid.org

Five Simple Ways To Sneak Fitness Into Your Life

For many of us, finding dedicated time to exercise can be a challenge. The desire to increase physical activity may be there, but the time just isn't. Fortunately, exercise doesn't have to be all or nothing to be successful. Instead, try to incorporate more activity into the things you are already doing on a regular basis to get fit a couple of minutes at a time. Here are a few ways to change your activity level without changing your schedule.

- Take the stairs. Make it a habit to choose the stairs over escalators or elevators and you're fitting in a great workout along the way.
- Walk and talk. Instead of having your phone conversation sitting at your desk or on the couch, stand up and walk around, march in place with your knees high or do leg lunges.
- Take commercial fitness breaks. During breaks from your TV show, get up and get moving. Try some crunches, push-ups or stretches. Even better, get the whole family involved.
- Commute your way to fitness. If you can walk or bike to your destination, do it. If not, park further away to add in some extra steps.
- Get creative with household chores. Carry your own groceries to build upper body strength, vacuum, sweep or rake at an increased pace to build cardio endurance, add simple stretches to unloading the dishwasher.

Source: American Heart Association, www.americanheart.org

Join In For The Great American Smokeout® November 18, 2010

Each year on the third Thursday in November, people celebrate the Great American Smokeout® by quitting for the day or for good. No matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, quitting can help you live longer and be healthier. Ex-smokers may enjoy a higher quality of life with fewer illnesses from cold and flu viruses, better self-reported health, and reduced rates of bronchitis and pneumonia.

If you are a smoker or use smokeless tobacco and would like to quit, visit the American Cancer Society's web site at www.cancer.org. You'll find more information about the Great American Smokeout® as well as tips to help you kick the habit.

Source: American Cancer Society, www.cancer.org



Home, Safe Home

When it comes to your home and family, no one wants an emergency. But the truth is, floods, fires and storms do happen. That's why it is so important to have a family emergency plan that everyone understands and can follow if trouble arises. Here are some critical elements to include in your plan:

- Have a safe room - in the case of severe weather like a tornado or other strong storm, make sure each family member knows which room in the house offers the best protection.
- Have an escape route - for the times when staying in the house is unsafe, be sure everyone knows how to leave and has practiced getting out quickly.
- Have a check-in location and contact person. Your family may not be together when an emergency happens. If evacuating your home is necessary, have a meeting place outside and away from the house where your family will gather to do a head count. For larger community situations such as flooding or tornados, have an out of town person you can all call to say where you are and if you're safe.
- Have a plan for your pets.
- Have an emergency supply kit.
- Have copies of all important medical and insurance papers accessible if you are faced with evacuating your home.
- As a family, take first aid, CPR and emergency preparedness classes.
- Teach young children how to call 911, how to get out of the house and not to be afraid of firefighters and other emergency personnel.
- Have safety audits. Regularly check detectors, restock emergency supplies and reevaluate emergency plans.

Sources: National Weather Service, www.nhc.noaa.gov, Federal Emergency Management Agency, www.fema.gov



Wash Your Hands For Good Health

One of the best ways to avoid the spread of germs is also one of the easiest. Just wash your hands! Washing your hands with soap and clean running water for 20 seconds is all it takes. No soap and water available? An alcohol-based hand sanitizer can also significantly reduce germs.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov

Community Events Calendar

- **Anthem Sandman Triathlon – Ocean swim, bike and run
September 19, Virginia Beach VA**
This 1k ocean swim, 14-mile bike ride and 5k run is famed to be one of the best in the mid-Atlantic region. To learn more, visit www.neptunefestival.com.
- **Anthem Great Pumpkin 5K – October 9, Reston VA**
Bring the family decked out in your best Halloween gear to enjoy the pedestrian-friendly route, a free kids pumpkin dash and best carved pumpkin competition. www.thegreatpumpkin5k.com
- **Anthem Into The Darkness Night Trail Ride – October 23, Roanoke VA**
Roanoke Valley's only 5k night cross country race at Explorer Park. www.mountainjunkies.net/into_the_darkness
- **Anthem Get Active Get Fit Halloween –
October 30, Richmond VA**
Enjoy demonstrations by fitness experts, healthy food samples and a family dance party led by Radio Disney along with exclusive access to the Science Museum and an appearance by a Disney star.

Anthem Notables

An Anthem grant to the **Virginia Tech Foundation Inc (Virginia 4-H)** program, 4-H Healthy Living: Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids was made to help children reduce their obesity levels.

Senior Navigator, Aging Well: Healthy Choices Solution Center received Anthem funding to help adults improve and sustain healthy physical activity levels.

Through Anthem's financial support, the **Virginia Public Safety Foundation, Inc.** Healthy Heroes will help adults reduce their risks for cardiac mortality.



This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please consult your doctor for advice about changes that may affect your health. Trade names of commonly used medications and devices are provided for ease of education but are not intended as particular endorsement. Your doctor may choose to use items not represented here. Some services may not be covered under your health plan. Please refer to your Health Plan Group Certificate and Schedule of Benefits for details concerning benefits, procedures and exclusions.