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Health Dimensions®

HealthyLife® Letter

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Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

Safe on 2 wheels

Cycling is a good form of exercise. But with more than 1.4 million injuries reported in 2012 according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, riders need to be safety conscious before hitting the pavement (literally).

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons offers cycling safety rules:

- Use a bicycle that is the proper size.
- Make sure you are fit enough to ride before you start pedaling.
- Change riding positions to reduce stress on pressure points on your body and avoid overstressing muscles.
- Always wear a helmet approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). It should fit snugly but comfortably and not obstruct vision.
- Check your bicycle's mechanical components regularly (brakes, tires, gears).
- Follow traffic signs and lights. Signal your turns so drivers can anticipate your actions.
- Ride in the direction of traffic. Be aware of all surroundings.
- Use caution on uneven or slippery surfaces.
- Do not listen to music with head phones, talk on your phone, text or do anything else that can obstruct your hearing and vision.
- Avoid loose clothing. Wear padded gloves and appropriate footwear. Never wear flip flops. Use padded cycling shorts for longer rides.
- At night, wear bright fluorescent colors; make sure to have rear reflectors. Both a working tail light and headlight should be visible from 500 feet away.



Top Ten Concerns: Adults across the U.S. are concerned about kids not getting enough exercise. That's the top health concern for children, according to a University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. For the first time, not enough exercise was rated by most adults at the top of the list (39%). That was followed closely by childhood obesity (38%) and smoking and tobacco use (34%). Also on the top 10 were drug abuse, bullying, stress, alcohol use, teen pregnancy, Internet safety, and child abuse and neglect.





Alcohol increases risk for breast cancer

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for women in the United States, after lung cancer. Dr. Erica Mayer, a breast cancer expert at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, says there are at least 5 simple ways women can reduce their risk of getting the disease:

- 1. Limit alcohol.** Research has shown having too much alcohol can increase your risk of breast cancer. If you choose to drink alcohol—including beer, wine, or liquor—limit yourself to no more than one half to one drink a day on average.
- 2. Get a mammogram.** Many health organizations advise women to get regular mammograms starting at age 40. “Mammography screening does not prevent or cure breast cancer, but it may detect the disease before symptoms occur,” said Dr. Mayer.
- 3. Eat a healthy diet and keep your weight under control.** The American Cancer Society recommends a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and fiber. “High-fat diets can lead to being overweight or obese, which is a risk factor for breast cancer,” said Dr. Mayer.
- 4. Exercise.** There’s growing evidence that physical activity reduces a woman’s breast cancer risk.
- 5. Determine if you have family history of breast cancer and be vigilant to early detection.** Twenty to 30% of people who develop breast cancer have a family history of the disease. About 5 to 10% of women carry a BRCA1 or BRCA 2 mutation, the so called “breast cancer genes.”

Another reason to stop smoking

Each year Americans buy nearly 300 billion cigarettes. A vast number of those cigarette butts, including the filters, will be flicked into the environment, landing along waterways, parks, beaches, and public roads. This makes cigarettes the number one littered item in the nation, according to Legacy, the nonprofit created in the wake of tobacco lawsuits. Cigarette butts are made mostly of plastic, which can take years to decompose, and they only break up into small particles of plastic. Join a cleanup event and help build awareness around your community and workplace.



{Note: Many topics like the one on this page are contained in a medical self-care guide, such as Healthier at Home®, Health at Home®, and HealthyLife® Self-Care Guide, and/or addressed by a nurse advice line. They serve as excellent resources. If you have a self-care guide and/or access to a nurse advice line, use it whenever you are unsure about what to do for symptoms and health issues you are experiencing. They can help you make better decisions about when to seek professional assistance and when you can treat yourself at home using self-care.}

Benefits of volunteering

Gallup surveys in 130 countries show people with higher personal well-being are more likely to say they give time, money, or help to others in their communities.

In general, volunteers reported higher levels of happiness, life-satisfaction, self-esteem, and a sense of control over life. Volunteering provides a sense of purpose, as well as social and physical activities. Also, studies have shown a strong link between volunteering and health benefits. Two hours a week, about 100 hours a year, is the number that is associated with these benefits:

- Less chronic pain
- Lower rates of heart disease
- Lower rates of depression, especially for volunteers age 60 and older
- Lower mortality rates

One study of alcoholics going through the Alcoholics Anonymous program, found that those who helped others were nearly twice as likely to stay dry a year later. Their levels of depression were lower, too.



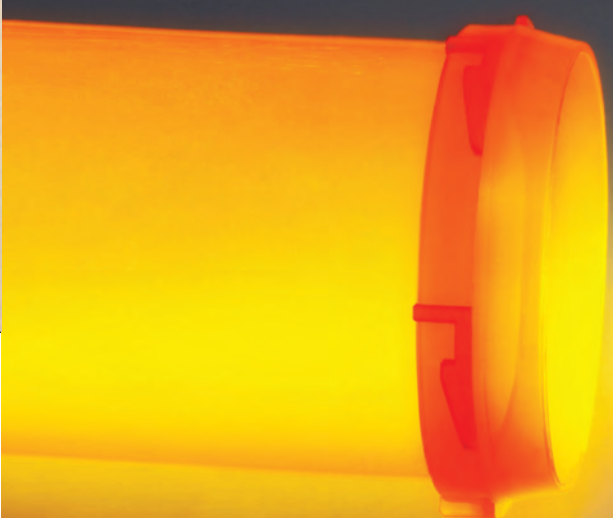
Rx painkiller deaths on the rise

From 1999 to 2010, deaths from prescription pain relief drugs increased more than 400 percent in women and 265 percent in men. These facts are from a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“Prescription painkiller deaths have skyrocketed in women (6,600 in 2010), four times as many as died from cocaine and heroin combined,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. “Stopping this epidemic in women – and men – is everyone’s business. Doctors need to be cautious about prescribing and patients about using these drugs.”

Use Rx pain relief medicines wisely

- Let your doctor know about all prescribed and OTC medicines you take. This includes ones that treat depression, anxiety, or sleep problems. It includes vitamins and herbal products, too.
- Ask your doctor the risk of addiction when he or she prescribes sleeping pills, strong painkillers, etc. Find out how long you should take the medicines. Ask if there are ways to help treat your problem without them.
- Find out how much alcohol, if any, can be taken with your prescribed medicines.
- Follow the guidelines that your doctor and pharmacist provide with every prescription.
- Do not take another person’s prescribed medicines.
- Do not share your medicines with others.



Buy local. Eat local.

Did you know the average supermarket produce travels about 2,000 miles to your neighborhood grocery store? Farmers' market produce travels less than 50 miles, according to University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension experts who offer these buying and storing tips:

- **Go right home from the market.** Foods will decline in quality, and perishable foods such as meats and eggs can pose food safety problems if left sitting in your car. Bring along a cooler with ice if it will take more than an hour or so to get perishables into your refrigerator.
- **Store at room temperature:** bananas, melons, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and winter squash. Store them in a clean, dry, well-ventilated place, away from direct sunlight and away from areas where meat is prepared.
- **Ripen on the counter and then put in the refrigerator:** avocados, kiwifruit, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums. Do not keep produce in a sealed plastic bag on the countertop. This slows ripening and may increase off-odors and decay from the buildup of carbon dioxide and depletion of oxygen inside the bag.
- **Store in refrigerator most other fresh fruits and vegetables.** Use your refrigerator crisper drawer for whole produce. Store fruits in a separate refrigerator crisper drawer from vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas, which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits and affect their quality.
- **Refrigerate fruits and vegetables in perforated plastic bags.** This helps maintain moisture yet provide air flow. Make your own: use a sharp object to make several small holes in a food-grade plastic bag (about 20 holes per medium-size bag). Air-tight plastic bags can lead to the growth of mold or bacteria.
- **Wash your hands and produce thoroughly.** Wash produce before you use it, NOT when you bring it home. Fresh produce has a natural protective coating that helps keep in moisture and freshness. Washing produce before storage causes it to spoil faster.
- **Remove and discard outer leaves.** Rinse under clean, running water just before preparing or eating. Don't use soap or detergent. It can get into produce and make you sick. Rub briskly—scrubbing with a clean brush or hands—to clean the surface. Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel. Rinse produce even when the peel is removed—such as melons and citrus fruits. Once you have cut through the protective skin of fruits and vegetables, bacteria can enter. Refrigerate cut or peeled fruits and vegetables within 2 hours.
- **Take your own bags or baskets to the farmers' markets.** And be sure to wash them too. Bacteria can grow inside.



Ulcers not caused by stress

The lining of your stomach makes acid and enzymes that help break down food into the nutrients you need. The lining protects itself from acid damage by releasing mucus. But sometimes the lining gets inflamed and starts making less acid, enzymes, and mucus. This type of inflammation is called gastritis.

You may have gastritis if you have pain or an uncomfortable feeling in your upper stomach. You could have nausea or vomiting. Or you may have no symptoms at all.

Untreated, some types of gastritis can lead to ulcers. These are sores in the stomach lining.

Some people think ulcers are caused by stress and spicy foods. But according to the NIH in Health, bacteria called *H. pylori* are often to blame. These bacteria break down the inner protective coating in the stomach and can cause inflammation.

H. pylori can spread by passing from person to person or through contaminated food or water. Infections can be treated with antibiotics.

One type of gastritis, called erosive gastritis, wears away the stomach lining. The most common cause of erosive gastritis is long-term use of medications called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. These include aspirin and ibuprofen. Stop taking these pain relievers and the gastritis usually clears up.

Less common causes of gastritis include digestive disorders (such as Crohn's disease) and autoimmune disorders in which the body's protective immune cells attack healthy cells in the stomach lining.

Gastritis can be diagnosed with an endoscope. A thin tube with a tiny camera on the end is inserted through the patient's mouth or nose and into the stomach. The doctor looks at the stomach lining and may remove some tissue samples for testing. Treatment will depend on the type of gastritis found.

Although stress and spicy foods don't cause gastritis and ulcers, they can make symptoms worse. Milk might provide brief relief, but it also increases stomach acid, which can worsen symptoms. Your doctor may advise taking antacids or other drugs to reduce acid in the stomach.

Gastritis can lead to ulcers over time. Symptoms of ulcers include pain between the belly button and breastbone that starts between meals or during the night. It briefly stops if you eat or take antacids, lasts for minutes to hours, and comes and goes for several days or weeks.

Contact your doctor right away if you have sudden sharp stomach pain that doesn't go away, black or bloody stools, or vomit that is bloody or looks like coffee grounds.



Difficult people in the workplace

A manager rushes into his employee's office at 4:30 p.m., drops a pile of papers on her desk, and barks, "I need these read, edited, and finalized by 8:30 a.m."

A woman calls in sick. She is shivering, coughing, and has a fever. Her supervisor screams, "I don't care what illness you have. If you're not in the office today, I'll take it as your resignation!"

These are real examples of workplace bullying that cause stress, depression, and anxiety. The National Mental Health Association estimates that each year more than one billion sick days can be due to mental health disorders caused by work stress. That's \$193 billion a year in lost earnings.

Psychology Professor Katerina Bezrukova studies the psychological effect of workplace injustices and intergroup relations at Santa Clara University.



She says there are 4 kinds of co-workers and supervisors to look out for:

1. **Narcissistic.** These types have fragile self-esteem. They may become outraged when someone challenges them. Bezrukova says avoid criticizing them. Document your own work, too, so you have a record of everything you do.
2. **Aggressive.** To them, everyone is a predator or prey. That's why they like to intimidate others and even bully them. They also tend to act frantic when a project comes in or a deadline is fast approaching. Bezrukova advises victims to stay out of the way. If they can, show them how management-by-hysteria can be inefficient.
3. **Rigid.** These types won't try anything new. They manage with viewpoint of "It's my way or the highway." This stems from fears of being pushed around. Bezrukova says let them feel like they are a part of the decision.
4. **Impaired.** These people have ADD, anxiety, depression, burnout, or substance abuse issues. They need professional help. Employee Assistance Programs or other kinds of intervention are best.

"People, who suffer from a workplace injustice of some sort, develop anger, frustration, anxiety, insomnia, headaches. These relationships, coupled with the connection between long-term, chronic psychological distress and increased risk of physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease, make this a crucial dollars and cents issue for business," says Bezrukova.

Just throw negative thoughts away

If you want to get rid of unwanted, negative thoughts, try just ripping them up and tossing them in the trash.

Researchers at Ohio State University found that when people wrote down their thoughts on a piece of paper and then threw the paper away, they mentally discarded the thoughts as well.

On the other hand, people were more likely to use their constructive thoughts when making judgments if they first wrote them down on a piece of paper and tucked the paper in a pocket to protect it.

“However you tag your thoughts— as trash or as worthy of protection— seems to make a difference in how you use those thoughts,” said Richard Petty, co-author of the study and professor of psychology. The study was published in *Psychological Science*.

“At some level, it can sound silly. But we found that it really works— by physically throwing away or protecting your thoughts, you influence how you end up using those thoughts,” he said.

Stress-reducing tips for working healthy

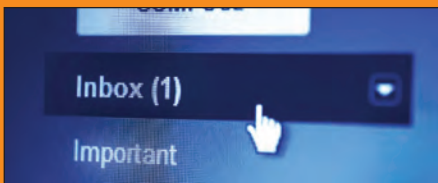
When you feel your stress level rising, breathe and look at the problem from a different angle.

- When you're in a stressful situation such as a business meeting, take a deep breath. Visualize someone you love or your favorite place on earth. You'll be transported out of the moment and reminded about what you really value in life.
- Are you in a high-pressure business situation? Maybe you need to ask yourself why. Can you balance your personal and work life? If not, develop an exit strategy. You'll get a better sense of control and have a goal.
- Let your co-workers know what's important to you. Maybe they'll better understand your point of view.
- Make a list of your personal priorities. What's important to you? Stick with your list. You may find that it's not about the money and it's all about your health (mental, physical, and emotional).
- Sometimes you just can't do it all. Admit it. Saying no to a project or a plan or a friend is okay.
- Recharge. Take your vacation. You earned it.



Trying to save money?

Ask for crisp new bills at the bank. Consumers will spend more to get rid of worn bills because they evoke feelings of disgust but are more likely to hold on to crisp new currency, according to a study in the Journal of Consumer Research.



Unsubscribe.

Even if a spam email instructs you to reply if you want to “unsubscribe,” it could be a trap. Don’t reply. By replying, you may only be verifying for that spammer that your address is active, according to the watchdog group Business Software Alliance.

Concussion and kids

More than a million concussions occur each year. Half of these blows to the brain happen in kids, and often when playing sports such as football and soccer, according to the NIH.

A concussion needs to be taken seriously. It can have a lasting effect on thinking, attention, learning, and memory. You can’t see a concussion, but doctors can use imaging such as CT scans or MRIs to look for problems.

Parents and coaches (and kids) should be aware of concussion symptoms. These include: nausea, headache, confusion, dizziness, blurry vision or double vision, feeling groggy, and memory problems.

Take steps to avoid concussion by wearing helmets for bicycling, skateboarding, and other activities including football. Kids with symptoms need to be taken out of the game and seen by a doctor.



If a concussion is diagnosed, kids need to avoid physical activity and gradually return to play under the care of a doctor.