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THE McKenzie, Tennessee **BANNER**

Taking The Mystery Out of Anxiety Disorders

It is normal to feel nervous from time to time, particularly when anticipating a potentially life-changing event. However, when nervousness is excessive, persistent and intense, or arises from seemingly innocuous stimuli, that could indicate the presence of an anxiety disorder.

What is Anxiety?

The American Psychiatric Association says anxiety is a normal response to stress. Anxiety disorders differ from normal nervousness because they involve excessive fear. The APA also says anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders and affect nearly 30 percent of adults at some point in their lives. It is time to seek help when anxiety interferes with your ability to function; you often overreact when something triggers your emotions; and you can't control your responses to situations.

What Contributes to Anxiety Disorders?

A combination of environmental factors and personality traits can increase the risk for developing anxiety disorders. These include:

- Stressful or traumatic events in early childhood or adulthood.

- Certain personality traits like shyness or behavioral inhibition.

- Family history of anxiety or another mental health condition.

- Physical conditions, including thyroid problems and heart arrhythmias.

- Being a woman. Researchers are still studying why women experience anxiety disorders in higher proportions than men. Some researchers suggest hormonal fluctuations in women are a possible explanation for the higher rates of anxiety.

What are the Types of Anxiety Disorders?

Several types of anxiety disorders exist, but some are more common than others.

- Generalized anxiety disorder:** GAD is persistent and excessive anxiety about activities or events, even routine tasks.

- Panic disorder:** This involves sudden feelings of intense fear or terror about certain situations. These panic attacks may lead to concerns about recurrence.

- Social anxiety disorder:** High levels of anxiety,

fear and avoidance occur during social situations, particularly fear of being judged or viewed negatively by others.

- Phobias:** Major anxiety is tied to a specific object or situation and a desire to avoid it. There are phobias concerning heights, insects, leaving the home, and more.

Anxiety disorders can develop in people dealing with substance abuse issues or certain medical conditions.

Treating Anxiety Disorders

It is important to note that anxiety disorders, while frightening and frustrating, are treatable. The APA says that while each anxiety disorder has unique characteristics, most respond well to psychotherapy (talk therapy) and medications. They can be given alone or in combination. Cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a type of psychotherapy, can help a person react and think differently in certain situations so they feel less anxious. Medications often are prescribed to provide relief from symptoms. The most common medications used are anti-anxiety medications, antidepressants and beta-blockers.

Anxiety disorders affect millions of people. There is help to be had and many people can overcome anxiety over time.

TIPS TO KICK THE COMMON COLD

The common cold is appropriately named. According to the American Lung Association, adults get an average of two to four colds per year while children typically get between six and eight colds annually. Colds indeed seem an inevitable part of life, and that may be even more so during winter.

Though colds can strike at any time, Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that the increased incidence rates of colds during cold seasons like fall and winter may be attributable to the increased amount of time people spend indoors. Extra time indoors means individuals spend more time in tight quarters with other people, which is notable because colds are highly contagious. There might not be a way to avoid colds this winter, but Johns Hopkins notes there are some strategies that can help treat a cold and potentially lessen its severity.

- Hydrate.** A concerted effort to stay hydrated can help your body fight the cold and potentially make you feel

better by easing congestion. When a cold strikes, make sure you drink plenty of the right fluids, which include water, decaffeinated tea with lemon, and broth. Caffeine can cause dehydration, so avoid coffee and caffeinated teas and sodas. Throat-soothing warm liquids like tea and broth can serve dual functions for those whose colds include a sore or dry throat.

- Gargle with salt water.** Though it may seem like an old wives' tale, gargling with salt water can effectively alleviate the pain and swelling of a sore throat. Johns Hopkins recommends a saltwater gargle with about one teaspoon of salt per cup of warm water.

- Utilize a humidifier.** Johns Hopkins notes that cold air holds less moisture than dry air. Dry air can worsen symptoms associated with sore throat, so a humidifier can be used to make indoor

air more moist and therefore more soothing to a sore throat. Johns Hopkins also reports that dry nostrils are more vulnerable to viruses, so employing a humidifier in winter may help your body more effectively fend off cold viruses.

- Get plenty of rest.** Sleep helps to strengthen the body's immune system, making it more effective at fighting off and overcoming the cold virus. Johns Hopkins recommends adults get between eight and 10 hours of sleep when they come down with a cold.

- Avoid unproven "treatments".** Some cold treatment techniques are ineffective at combatting cold viruses. Johns Hopkins notes that antibiotics are designed to treat bacterial infections, not viruses. In addition, there is little evidence suggesting zinc and vitamin C have any impact on cold viruses.

Colds may be inevitable, but knowing what to do when a cold strikes may help reduce the severity and length of the common cold.

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Did You Know?

According to the World Health Organization, roughly 5 percent of the world's population, or more than 400 million people, requires rehabilitation to address disabling hearing loss. And that could only prove the start, as the WHO estimates that

2.5 billion individuals will have some degree of hearing loss by 2050. The consequences of hearing loss can be profound. Unaddressed hearing loss can adversely affect cognition and contribute to social isolation. The WHO notes that adults with hearing

loss have considerably higher rates of unemployment than individuals with no hearing deficits. In addition, unaddressed hearing loss can be costly, with estimates from the WHO suggesting the annual global costs are around \$980 billion. Those costs include a number of expenses, including hearing devices, education support and lost productivity.

SIGNS YOU MIGHT BE ALLERGIC TO YOUR MEDICATION

Medicine helps billions of people across the globe stay healthy. Medicines are used to treat existing illnesses and reduce a patient's risk of developing others. As effective as medicines can be, no two humans are the same, so medications that may help one person could prove harmful to another.

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology notes that all medications can cause side effects, but only 5 to 10 percent of adverse reactions are due to allergies. Allergic reactions begin in the immune system, which controls how the human body defends itself. If a person is allergic to a certain type of medication, his or her immune system identifies the drug as an invader or allergen and it can respond in various ways. The AAAAI notes that the most common immune response to medication is a result of the expansion of T cells. These cells identify the drug as foreign and create a delayed immune response that most often affects the skin.

While allergic reactions to medications may not be very common, the AAAAI says that such reactions can be life-threatening. That highlights the importance of learning the signs of allergic reactions.

Symptoms of Drug Allergies

The American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology advises anyone who experiences these symptoms while taking medication to speak with their physicians, including an allergist, immediately:

- ▶ Skin rash or hives
- ▶ Itching
- ▶ Wheezing or other breathing problems
- ▶ Swelling
- ▶ Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a rare but severe allergic reaction that can occur suddenly and quickly worsen. Symptoms of allergic reactions to medication are not often life-threatening, but anaphylaxis can be deadly. The AAAAI notes that anaphylaxis occurs when an over-release of chemicals forces a person to go into shock. Even people who have already administered epinephrine, the drug used to treat severe allergic reactions, should visit an emergency room immediately at the first sign of anaphylaxis, which may include trouble breathing, tightness of the throat, hoarse voice, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and dizziness. Rapid heart-beat, low blood pressure,



a feeling of doom, cardiac arrest, and fainting are some additional signs of anaphylaxis.

According to the AAAAI, most anaphylactic reactions occur within one hour of taking a medication or receiving an injection of the medication. However, such reactions also can take place hours after a medication has been taken.

Antibiotics are the most common cause of anaphylaxis, but the AAAAI notes that recent research has shown that chemotherapy drugs and monoclonal antibodies also can induce anaphylaxis.

People take medicine to feel better, but sometimes their bodies and certain medications are not a match. As a result, people must be vigilant when taking medications for the first time, paying particular attention to how their bodies react. More information about allergic reactions to medication is available at www.aaaai.org.

SAFELY MANAGE MULTIPLE MEDICATIONS

Prescription medications prolong individuals' lives and can make their daily lives more comfortable and manageable. As individuals age, their doctors may recommend various prescriptions, some of which they may need to take long-term. Managing multiple medications at once can be difficult, as it can be easy to lose track of which medications have been taken when individuals are prescribed more than one. In recognition of that difficulty, the National Institutes of Health offers the following tips to help individuals safely manage multiple medications.

▶ **Maintain an updated list of all medications you take.** A medication list should include both prescription and over-the-counter medications. OTC medicines include vitamins, supplements

and herbal products.

- ▶ **Share your medication list with family or close friends.** A medication list should be accessible, and seniors can share it with close family members, who can then advise medical professionals which medicines you are taking in emergency situations when you may not be conscious.
- ▶ **Routinely review your medicine list with health care providers and pharmacists.** The NIH recommends individuals discuss their medicines with their physicians during each appointment. Ask if all medicines still need to be taken and if dosages should be changed. When visiting specialists, be sure to provide a list of all medications you are

currently taking.

- ▶ **Ask questions about newly prescribed medications.** Drug interactions can be dangerous, so it's important to ask if and how any newly prescribed medications may interact with drugs, vitamins or supplements you are already taking.
- ▶ **Alert health care providers to any new side effects.** Immediately contact your physician if any new side effects present. The NIH recommends individuals continue to take their medications unless their doctor says otherwise.
- ▶ **Use a pill organizer.** A pill organizer makes it easy to manage multiple medications and can help individuals remember which pills they have taken.

Millions of individuals 60 and older take more than one medicine each day. Some simple strategies can ensure seniors safely manage their medications.

5 WAYS TO PROTECT HEARING EVERY DAY

People rely on headphones or ear buds to listen to music, stream movies or participate in work-related meetings more than ever before. Having the volume too loud can contribute to hearing loss over time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says five in 10 young people listen to their music or other audio too loudly. Overall, 48 million people in the United States have trouble hearing in one or both of their ears. Johns Hopkins Medical Center reports approximately 15 percent of adults 18 years of age or older report some trouble hearing, and the risk of hearing problems increases with age.

Once it's gone, hearing cannot be restored in many cases. To protect hearing and guard against future hearing loss, consider these recommendations.

1 **Ask for a baseline hearing test.** It's easier to measure hearing

loss if there is a baseline by which it can be measured. During your annual physical, ask for a hearing test or a referral to an audiologist. This can set the course for monitoring progression of any future hearing loss.

2 **Wear hearing protection.** There are various types of hearing protection that can filter out certain levels of sound. Many earplugs, like the ones musicians wear or those worn when attending rock concerts, can reduce the sound by approximately 25 dB. Custom fit ear plugs provide more noise reduction, in upwards of 35 to 40 dB. They are optimal for high-noise environments, such as when mowing lawns or operating machinery.

3 **Turn down the volume.** Experts recommend adhering to the 60/60 rule when enjoying audio through headphones. This suggestion is to listen with the headphones at no

more than 60 percent volume for no more than 60 minutes a day. Earbuds fit directly next to the eardrum and can be harmful to your hearing. If possible, choose over-the-ear headphones instead.

4 **Have custom molds made.** Rather than turning up the volume, people can have custom ear molds made for use with earphones. The custom ear molds will block outside noise, allowing for higher quality listening.

5 **Keep your ears dry.** Moisture in the ear can cause bacteria to grow and potentially lead to infections. Towel-dry ears gently after showering or swimming. Avoid the temptation to use cotton swabs to dry the ears. For the most part, ears are self-cleaning, and using a cotton swab can push wax and cause it to become compacted in the ear canal.

In addition to these tips, discussing hearing health with a doctor is a wise idea.

Signs Kids Could Be Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss is often associated with aging, and understandably so. Individuals from all walks of life undoubtedly have an aging friend or relative who has experienced some degree of hearing loss, and millions of seniors across the globe would admit to having some difficulty with their hearing. But hearing loss also can affect children and, if undiagnosed, it can have an adverse affect on nearly all aspects of their lives.

The World Health Organization estimates that, as of 2021, approximately 34 million children present with hearing loss that requires rehabilitation. Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that hearing loss in children can be present at birth or develop later in childhood. Hearing loss that develops later in childhood is known as acquired hearing loss, and parents can look for various signs that kids could be losing their hearing. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association notes that the signs of hearing loss in children may include:

- ▶ Delayed speech and/or language development
- ▶ Speech sound disorder:

The ASHA notes that speech sound disorders include any difficulty or combination of difficulties with perception, motor production, or phonological representation of speech sounds and speech segments

- ▶ Difficulty in following or understanding instructions
- ▶ Frequent requests for repetition
- ▶ Use of increased volume on devices, including televisions, personal music players and tablets
- ▶ Difficulty effectively expressing themselves: Children can exhibit difficulty expressing themselves verbally and/or via written language
- ▶ Frustration with communication breakdowns
- ▶ Feeling of exhaustion at the end of a school day
- ▶ Difficulties at school: Children with hearing loss may experience academic, behavioral, or social difficulties in the classroom and on campus

What Causes Acquired Hearing Loss in Children?

The causes of hearing loss in children can be as simple as cerumen (ear wax) or as complex as damage to middle or inner structures after suffering trauma to the head. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta notes that over-the-counter ear wax removal drops can effectively clean ears and restore kids' hearing, though such drops may need to be part of routine preventive health care measures. Ear infections, encephalitis, excessive noise exposure, meningitis, the presence of a foreign body in the ear, and viral infections like measles or mumps also can contribute to hearing loss in kids. Physicians can direct treatment of hearing loss based on the cause of kids' hearing loss, but it's worth noting that some hearing loss may require long-term use of hearing aids, surgery or medication.

Though often seen as a byproduct of aging, hearing loss affects millions of children as well. More information about children and hearing loss can be found at asha.org.

How to Avoid Drug Interactions

Hundreds of millions of people across the globe rely on medications for their survival. According to the National Center for Health Statistics' National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2015-16, nearly 46 percent of the population of the United States used prescription drugs in 2015-16. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that prescription drug use is similar in Canada, where the Canadian Health Measures Survey found that roughly two-thirds of adults between the ages of 40 and 79 used at least one prescription drug in a 30-day period.

Prescription drugs may be vital to many people's survival, but they also can prove deadly if mismanaged. That's especially true for people taking more than one medication. Taking multiple medications each day may be necessary, but it's equally necessary that people taking more than one medication every day take steps to avoid drug interactions.

▶ **Discuss all medications with your doctors.** Pri-

mary care physicians and specialists should be kept in the loop regarding which medications their patients are taking. Patients should never assume their doctors know every medication they're taking. When prescribed a new medication, mention to your prescribing doctor what else you are taking. Include prescription medications but also over-the-counter, or OTC, drugs, supplements and even vitamins. Use a notes app on your smartphone to create a running list of your medications so you can easily access it during doctor's appointments.

▶ **Read all labels.** Prescription drugs and OTC medications list potential side effects in different ways. Each prescription medication comes with a lengthy list of potential side effects, while OTC labels cite potential side effects in the "Warnings" section on their labels. Familiarize yourself with all potential side effects of a given medication prior to tak-

ing it. Err on the side of caution and wait to speak with your physician before taking an OTC medication you're unfamiliar with.

▶ **Order all prescriptions from the same pharmacy.** Ordering all prescriptions from the same pharmacy makes it easy to access all prescriptions. Pharmacists can look up all prescriptions and crosscheck interactions that may result from taking certain medications at the same time.

▶ **Utilize online resources.** The Drug Interactions checker at www.drugs.com/drug_interactions.html is a convenient way to learn about the potential interactions that can result when taking more than one medication or even mixing it with certain foods or beverages.

Drug interactions can be deadly, which only underscores the importance of being careful when taking more than one medication at a time.



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Jamie Martin, NBC-HIS

Did You Know?

Cancer is a disease most often discussed in regard to its effect on human beings, but animal lovers' furry friends also are vulnerable to cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, there are roughly six million new cancer diagnoses

made in dogs and a similar number in cats each year in the United States. The gravity of that number is even greater when considering that estimates indicate there are roughly 100 million dogs and cats in the United States. That

means cancer is diagnosed in approximately 12 percent of all dogs and cats in the United States in a given year. Though animals may experience cancer differently than humans, the NCI reports that cancers that affect dogs and cats share tumor biology and behavior with human cancers.

HOW PT CAN BENEFIT SOFT TISSUE INJURY RECOVERY

Soft tissue injuries are more common than people may realize. In fact, anyone with an undiagnosed pain in his or her body may be suffering from a soft tissue injury.

Soft tissue injuries, when left untreated, can be troublesome and jeopardize individuals' athletic pursuits.

Verywell Health defines soft tissue injuries as trauma to any muscle, skin, tendon, or ligament in the body. Injuries may result from overuse or acute trauma, which is an external force applied to the body. Common examples of soft tissue injuries are lacerations, abrasions, contusions, sprains/strains, bursitis, and tendinitis.

Strains are injuries to muscles or tendons and sprains are injuries to ligaments, which are elastic bands of tissue that connect and stabilize bones. Both strains and sprains are common soft tissue injuries. Bursitis and tendinitis also are common.

Bursitis is an inflammation of the bursa, a fluid-filled sac that provides a cushion between the bones and muscles or tendons. Tendinitis is an inflammation of the tendons, which connect muscles to bones.

Many minor (Grade 1) soft tissue injuries that involve muscles, tendons and ligaments may heal when injured persons follow the protocol known as R.I.C.E., which is an acronym for Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. R.I.C.E. is widely recommended for these types of injuries. However, more serious soft tissue injuries may take extended time to heal. Some of these injuries also may lead to permanent changes in muscles, tendons and ligaments, causing certain body parts to cease functioning how they used to. That may be the case with Grade 2 (moderate) or Grade 3 (severe) injuries. Further medical attention may be

needed and physical therapy may be prescribed.

The Ace Physical Therapy & Sports Medicine Institute says soft tissue injuries account for most of the injuries that outpatient physical therapists treat. A therapist will analyze the type of injury and the pain or impairment it is causing to develop a rehabilitation program. Physical therapists often perform various treatments geared toward reducing swelling and inflammation. Manual therapies to help restore normal motion also are part of soft tissue treatment plans. Stretching and strengthening exercises may be incorporated to improve endurance and repair soft tissue. Orthotic therapy may be needed to correct certain imbalances, advises Algonquin Chiropractic Center. Physical therapists also can educate patients about how to strengthen the body to help reduce risk for future injuries.

Soft tissue injuries are common and usually can resolve with rest. Guided physical therapy may be prescribed for more severe cases.

The Basics of SPRAINS

Athletes and fitness enthusiasts often must contend with injuries. Proper technique and safety protocols can greatly reduce a person's risk for injury while competing or exercising, but no one can completely eliminate their risk of being injured while engaging in physical activity.

Many an athlete has experienced a sprain at one point or another. In fact, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons notes that sprains are among the most common soft-tissue injuries. Because of that, it can benefit athletes to learn about sprains so they're better prepared to confront one should they get hurt while competing or training.

What Is A Sprain?

According to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, a sprain is an injury to a ligament, the tissue that connects two or more bones at a joint. When athletes suffer a sprain, one or more of their ligaments are stretched or torn.

What's The Difference Between a Sprain and a Strain?

It's easy to mistake sprains with strains, or assume both injuries are the same. But unlike sprains, which affect the ligaments, strains are injuries to muscles or tendons. Tendons are the fibrous cords of tissue



that connect muscle to bone. When a person has a muscle strain, a muscle or tendon is stretched or torn.

Which Areas Of The Body Are Vulnerable To Sprains?

The AAOS notes that the ankles, knees and wrists are most vulnerable to sprains. Many basketball players have experienced sprained ankles, which occur when the foot turns inward, placing extreme tension on the ligaments of the outer ankle. Sudden twists can result in a sprained knee, while sprained wrists are often the result of falling onto an outstretched hand.

Are There Different Types Of Sprains?

Not all sprains are the same, and the AAOS notes some may be mild while others more severe. The three categories of sprain are:

Grade 1: Considered a

mild sprain, a grade 1 sprain is marked by slight stretching and some damage to the fibers of the ligament.

Grade 2: A grade 2 sprain causes partial tearing of the ligament and is marked by abnormal looseness in the joint when it moves in certain ways.

Grade 3: Significant instability can result from a grade 3 sprain, which is characterized by a complete tear of the ligament.

No matter which type of sprain a person suffers, he or she is likely to experience pain, bruising, swelling, and inflammation. The intensity of these symptoms is linked to the grade of the sprain.

Sprains are an unfortunate side effect of physical activity. Learning to recognize sprains can help athletes better understand their bodies should they suffer an injury.

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THE BASICS OF LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE

Many older adults get some peace of mind by taking steps to finance long-term care should they become incapable of living independently.

LT Care Consumer, a health care advisory company, says 70 percent of people over age 65 will require some type of care at some point in their lives. According to the 2017 Cost of Care study by Genworth Financial, the average annual cost for a private room at a nursing home is \$97,455. Such costs illustrate why long-term care insurance can be a wise investment.

Long-term care, or LTC, encompasses services and support that assist individuals with the activities of daily living. ADLs include bathing, eating, dressing, toileting, and more. In addition, LTC may support needs such as caring for pets, household chores, medicine management, and meal preparation. LTC may be provided by specialized assisted living facilities or by in-home care workers.

The resource Long Term Care Primer advises that individuals typically must fund their own long-term care. Many facilities are not subsidized by government assistance programs under Medicare in the United States. Medicaid may step in for certain individuals who are of limited means,

but that assistance may be exclusive to those living in skilled nursing facilities. That means the bulk of paying for long-term care rests on the individual.

Long-term care insurance can pay for care to treat chronic health conditions and meet personal needs over an extended period of time. This is known as custodial care. Individuals who have habits or health issues that could result in the need for LTC in the future should look into LTC insurance. LTC insurance also can be a sound investment for individuals who cannot afford extended nursing care out-of-pocket.

The Ohio Department of Insurance notes that policies may vary, but they typically include a deductible or elimination period, which is a time when the policy holder is liable for payment before the insurance begins. Policies typically include a daily benefit as well. This is the maximum amount the insurance company will pay toward each day in the nursing facility; the policy holder may be responsible for the difference. Policies also include a benefit period, or the length of time the policy will pay the daily benefit, which can be a few years or a lifetime.

Individuals also have other options in regard to securing long-term care. Care.

com says comprehensive LTC policies, combination policies and riders to current life insurance policies may help augment long-term care needs. Because LTC insurance - and paying for health care in general - can be quite confusing, people are urged to speak to professionals about their options and whether LTC insurance is necessary. A 2014 study by the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College estimated that only 20 to 30 percent of people would benefit from a policy. Researchers concluded that, while many people do need long-term care, they may not need it for an extended period of time and may be able to cover their care with their own savings. Furthermore, cost for policies may be \$2,000 a year - which is a concern for some people.

Individuals who purchase LTC insurance should know that medical underwriting for policies can be extensive. Coverage may be denied for current or past health conditions. Most people find that the best age at which to buy LTC insurance is in one's mid-50s. Healthy individuals may be eligible for discounts on LTC premiums.

Long-term care insurance is a consideration for older adults facing the potential for care assistance in the future. Because considerable cost is involved, potential policy holders should discuss their options with insurance and financial professionals.

CHALLENGES NEW MOTHERS FACE, HOW TO HANDLE THEM

Pregnancy is an exciting time in a woman's life. Whether a woman is a first-time mother or expecting again, this is a unique time that's unlike any other in a woman's life.

Once the baby shower gifts have been tucked away and it's been a few weeks postpartum, that high of new motherhood may be replaced with various challenges, which can be especially unique for new mothers. Life as a new mom certainly can bring about immense modifications to lifestyle, physical appearance and even mood.

Here are some common changes that come from new motherhood and strategies regarding how to handle them.

Breastfeeding Struggles

The saying "breast is best" has been around for some time. According to Breastfeeding Mama, breast milk has antibodies that help a baby fight off infection. It also evolves as needed to meet the needs of babies as they grow and develop. Some women are unable to breastfeed successfully, and some moms may feel the stigma of not being able to provide naturally for their children. According to the Office on Women's Health, low milk supply, sore nipples, engorgement, plugged ducts, inverted or flat nipples, and infections may make breastfeeding difficult for women. Working with a lactation consultant could help new mothers iron out any difficulties they encounter. Choosing to pump breast milk and then using bottles



are some additional ways to work around the challenges of breastfeeding.

Physical Recovery

Many people talk about how difficult childbirth can be, but there isn't much shared about the recovery. Those who had vaginal deliveries can expect soreness and injury recovery if tears occurred during delivery. After delivery, a woman will shed the superficial mucous membrane that lined the uterus during pregnancy, says the Mayo Clinic. A discharge made up of this and blood can occur for weeks. Afterpains, which are like contractions, may occur as well. Incontinence and hemorrhoids also may occur after delivering a baby.

Women who have undergone Cesarean sections will have to recover from the surgery. Fatigue, pain at the incision site, and avoidance of heavy lifting is necessary.

It can take weeks before a new mother starts to feel like herself. Patience, relying on others for help and making time to focus on oneself can help new moms heal.

Mood Changes

According to PostpartumDepression.org, one in 10 women will experience postpartum depression after giving birth (other studies suggest one in seven women develop postpartum depression). The condition generally lasts between three and six months. Younger mothers under age 25 may be more vulnerable to postpartum depression.

Even if full-blown postpartum depression does not occur, hormonal changes post-delivery can cause mood swings that are similar to those experienced during pregnancy. Feeling overwhelmed, short-tempered, resentment, and similar emotions can occur. Talking to others or even a professional therapist can assist new moms. In the event of severe symptoms, a doctor may suggest a short course of antidepressants or anti-anxiety medication.

Changes are to be expected when baby arrives. Moms can do their best to cope with the ups and downs.

Potential Pregnancy Complications

Women anticipate many changes to their bodies when they become pregnant. Of course, there are the visual effects that take place, namely the uterus expanding to accommodate the growing fetus. But there are many less visible changes going on that ensure both mother and child can thrive.

March of Dimes says there were 3,664,292 live births in the United States in 2021, while Statistics Canada says there were 351,679 live births, excluding Yukon, across Canada in 2022. Millions of children are born each year across North America, and many of these pregnancies and births are free from complications. However, complications can arise during pregnancy. Here's a look at some of the issues women may experience.

Amniotic Fluid Issues

Amniotic fluid is the li-

uid sac that surrounds the fetus, says Johns Hopkins Medicine. Too much fluid can cause the sac to rupture and result in preterm labor. Common causes of excessive amniotic fluid include diabetes, multiples pregnancy, incompatible blood types, and birth defects.

Anemia

Pregnancy puts a strain on a mother's body. Anemia is a condition marked by a lower than normal amount of healthy red blood cells. Pregnant women may get iron-deficiency anemia because the body needs more iron than normal at this time. Treating the causes of anemia can help manage the condition.

Diabetes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says having diabetes before or during pregnan-

cy increases the risk of preeclampsia, Cesarean delivery and the baby being born too large. High blood sugar at the time of conception increases the risk of birth defects, stillbirth and preterm birth. It's important to manage diabetes throughout conception and pregnancy.

Preeclampsia

The National Institutes of Health says preeclampsia is a serious medical condition that can lead to preterm delivery. The cause of preeclampsia is unknown. The condition presents as high blood pressure and signs of liver or kidney damage in women after the twentieth week of pregnancy.

Hyperemesis Gravidarum

Although a certain amount of nausea and vomiting may be expected in the early weeks of pregnancy, hyperemesis gravidarum is a more extreme type of morning sickness. Persistent nausea and vomiting during pregnancy can lead to weight loss and dehydration requiring intensive treatment.

Placenta Problems

With placental abruption the placenta becomes detached from the uterine wall too soon, leading to bleeding. The fetus also is deprived of oxygen and nutrients. Placenta previa is a condition where the placenta is attached close to or covering the cervix, obstructing a vaginal birth.

Various complications can occur during pregnancy, but the good news is that many of them can be treated or mitigated without affecting women or their children.

Stay Healthy While Pregnant

Pregnancy can be an exciting time in a couple's life. Ensuring mother and child stay healthy is a foremost concern during pregnancy, and women can do various things to maintain their health during this magical time in their lives.

Avoid tobacco and alcohol.

It is never a good idea to smoke or drink alcohol while pregnant. The moment a woman learns she is pregnant, she should cease these habits if she is a smoker and/or drinker.

Visit an obstetrician for prenatal testing.

A health care provider can counsel a woman through the stages of her pregnancy. Routine blood tests and additional screenings are part of prenatal care, which is important for learning about the development of the fetus and ensuring a healthy pregnancy.

Healthy eating is important.

Nemours Kids Health says eating a nutritious diet is important for anyone, but when a woman is pregnant she needs to pay special attention to her diet to boost her baby's growth and development. Nutritious foods include lean meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.

Increase fluid intake.

It is important for a pregnant woman to drink plenty of water and other healthy beverages to support the life inside her. Water can prevent excessive swelling of limbs and urinary



tract/bladder infections and help a woman avoid constipation. The Institute of Medicine recommends roughly 10 cups of fluids daily.

Maintain a healthy weight.

Weight gain is common during pregnancy, but it is important to avoid gaining too much extra weight. Physical fitness helps keep the heart, bones and mind healthy during pregnancy. So after checking with her doctor, a pregnant woman should engage in workouts that align with her physical abilities.

Be mindful of medication.

Certain over-the-counter and prescription medications are unsafe during pregnancy. A woman should speak with her doctor to find out which medications should be avoided.

Take an Rh factor blood test.

According to the Mayo Clinic, Rh factor is

an inherited protein found on the surface of red blood cells. Having the protein makes a person Rh positive. The absence of the protein makes one Rh negative. Rh positive is much more common. During pregnancy, problems may arise if a mother is Rh negative and the baby is Rh positive. Although the blood of both mother and fetus don't usually mix during pregnancy, a small amount can mix during the birth, introducing antibodies. While this will not affect a first pregnancy, subsequent pregnancies can be impacted. An injection of Rh immune globulin typically will be administered if a woman is Rh negative during pregnancy. A second shot may come after the birth if her infant is found to be Rh positive.

Women can employ various strategies to increase their chances of enjoying a healthy pregnancy.

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DIG INTO THESE FACTS ABOUT A VEGETARIAN DIET

Vegetarians adhere to plant-based diets, primarily avoiding meat and poultry in lieu of alternative protein sources. The World Animal Foundation reports there are approximately 1.5 billion vegetarians across the world, making up roughly 22 percent of the global population. The organization Cook Unity reports that, as of 2022, 5 to 8 percent of the United States population declares themselves as vegetarian.

People who are considering switching to vegetarian diets may not understand how to transition to a new way of eating. Experts say that a vegetarian diet can be very healthy if it is approached in a way that ensures individuals consume a nutritionally balanced diet.

Type of Vegetarians
Vegetarianism breaks down into a few different categories.

- ▶ **Lacto-ovo vegetarians:** These vegetarians consume eggs and dairy products but do not eat any meat, poultry or fish.
- ▶ **Lacto-vegetarians:** These vegetarians consume dairy but avoid eggs, meat, fish, and poultry.
- ▶ **Ovo-vegetarians:** These vegetarians omit meat, fish, poultry, and dairy products but consume eggs.
- ▶ **Pescatarians:** These vegetarians eliminate meat and poultry from their diets but allow fish.



▶ **Vegans:** Individuals who are vegans eliminate all animal-based and animal-derived products.

Can Vegetarians Meet Their Nutritional Needs?

Harvard Health Publishing says in recent years the pendulum into the study of vegetarianism has swung from the direction of pointing out potential nutritional deficiencies to confirming health benefits of meat-free eating. Today, plant-based eating is recognized as nutritionally sufficient and a way to reduce chronic illnesses.

The American Dietetic Association says a vegetarian diet should be "appropriately planned" and nutritionally diverse. While a diet of pizza and chips certainly can be billed as vegetarian, it is not a healthy way to gain nutrients. It is essential to make sure that a wide variety of

fruits, vegetables and whole grains are consumed.

Pay Attention to Specific Nutrients

Depending on which foods are eliminated, people adhering to vegetarian diets may experience nutrient deficiency. Therefore, attention should be placed on vitamin B-12, calcium, vitamin D, protein, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc, and iodine, which largely are found in animal-based products. Seaweed can be a vegetarian option for iodine; enriched cereals can provide iron and zinc; walnuts and olives can provide omega-3 fatty acids; and soy and legumes can fill in protein deficits. Individuals can work with doctors or dietitians to plan balanced, plant-based meals.

People considering vegetarian diets can educate themselves about the lifestyle and how to maintain optimal health.

Make Vet Visits Easier For All Involved

People often get anxious about visiting the doctor, and the same can be said for pets. According to the online animal resource Top Dog Tips, a lot of dogs and cats have serious anxiety about going to the vet.

Veterinarian visits typically happen once per year, and the earlier your pet can become more comfortable and acclimated to the process, the better it will behave during each subsequent visit. The following are some steps pet owners can take to make vet visits go smoothly.

- ▶ **Handle your pet frequently.** Teach your pet to accept touching of the paws, ears, mouth, tail, legs, and stomach. Regular sessions petting and touching your pet may make him or her more comfortable when the vet has to do so.
- ▶ **Consider waiting out-**

side. Research from Companion Animal Psychology says 30 percent of dogs are highly stressed while sitting in the waiting room of the vet's office. It can be hectic in the waiting room, with lots of new smells, people coming in and out and animals with all sorts of energy. If waiting rooms put your pet on edge, wait outside.

- ▶ **Associate the carrier with comfort.** If you pull out the crate only when the pet will be going to the vet, the animal will soon associate it with negative experiences. Instead, use the crate frequently and rely on treats so that the dog or cat sees it as a safe and fun space to spend its time. Take frequent car rides to different destinations so pets don't associate car rides with

vet visits.

- ▶ **Find the right veterinarian.** Interview several vets to find an office and staff who love interacting with your pet and can make him or her comfortable.
- ▶ **Stay relaxed yourself.** Pets can sense their owner's energy. If you are worked up and anxious, then your animal may feed off of those feelings. By remaining calm, you can help keep your pet calm.
- ▶ **Do a fun or practice visit.** Acclimate the pet to the vet's office with a trial run. This way he or she can interact with the vet and learn the smells and sounds under less stressful conditions. This is a great way for the pet to have a positive initial experience with its new vet.

Vet visits are vital to pets' long-term health. Setting the stage for positive experiences early on can make visits go smoothly throughout the pet's life.

SAFETY FIRST BEFORE MIXING DRUGS

Billions of people across the globe take medications each day. Certain medications can help people with potentially debilitating or even deadly conditions live normal lives, while others can help people overcome relatively minor issues like muscle aches or seasonal allergies.

The American Heart Association notes that mixing drugs can produce unexpected side effects. This can make it dangerous for people already on prescription medications to use over-the-counter drugs for issues like headache or seasonal allergies. Understanding the potential interactions between their prescriptions and common prescription and over-the-counter medications can help people stay safe.

- ▶ **Antihistamines:** Antihistamines are widely used to alleviate symptoms of the common cold or seasonal allergies, such as runny nose, itchy eyes and sneezing. The AHA notes that, when taken along with blood pressure medication, antihistamines can contribute to an accelerated heart rate and cause blood pressure to spike. The AHA also cautions people taking sedatives, tranquilizers or prescriptions to treat

high blood pressure or depression to consult their physicians before taking antihistamines.

- ▶ **Bronchodilators:** Bronchodilators relax and open the airways in the lungs and are used to treat various lung conditions, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. These drugs make it easier to breathe and are available via prescriptions. But patients with heart disease, high blood pressure, thyroid disease, and/or diabetes should discuss the potential interactions between bronchodilators and other medications they may be taking with their physicians.

- ▶ **Cordarone:** According to Drugs.com, Cordarone is used to treat potentially deadly abnormal heartbeats. Cordarone can cause severe problems that affect the lungs, thyroid or liver, and can be dangerous when combined with other drugs. For example, the AHA notes that patients who take more than 20 milligrams of Zocor, a drug used to lower "bad" cholesterol and potentially to lower the risk of stroke, heart

attack and other conditions, while also taking Cordarone are at risk of developing rhabdomyolysis. Rhabdomyolysis is a condition marked by the breakdown of muscle tissue that can lead to kidney failure or death. The AHA also says that Cordarone can inhibit or reduce the effects of the blood thinner Coumadin.

- ▶ **Nicotine replacement products:** People taking prescriptions for depression or asthma should consult their physicians before taking any nicotine replacement products. The Federal Drug Administration notes that doctors may want to change dosages of patients' current medications before recommending they take any nicotine replacement products. The FDA also advises people to speak with their physicians before trying these products if they have diabetes, heart disease, asthma or stomach ulcers; have had a recent heart attack; have high blood pressure but do not take any medication for it; or have a history of irregular heartbeat.

Drug interactions can complicate treatment of various conditions. People currently on medication are urged to speak with their physicians before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter drugs.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS OF MEDICATIONS, SUPPLEMENTS

Health professionals recommend a bevy of medications to their patients when they the benefits of such remedies outweigh the possible risks. The same can be said for vaccinations and other health therapies, such as vitamin and mineral supplementation. While supplements and medications are safe when taken as directed, they still have the potential to cause some unwanted side effects.

Over-the-counter medicines, prescriptions or even herbal dietary supplements can cause side effects. WebMD notes that most of these effects are minor and may only be a temporary inconvenience. But some side effects may be more serious. Recognizing common side effects may not make them easier to confront, but it can give people an idea of what to expect. WebMD, the DNA testing firm Sequencing and the healthcare services research experts at Sehat report that the following are some common side effects of medications and supplements.

Stomach Discomfort
Since most drugs and supplements need to go through

the gastrointestinal system to be absorbed, stomach discomfort, constipation and nausea can occur. This is one reason why experts typically recommend taking antibiotics, which can cause indigestion and diarrhea, with food. The vitamins and minerals in multivitamins also can cause stomach discomfort. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs may cause the formation of gastric ulcers and stomach bleeding when taken for extended periods of time.

Drowsiness
Drowsiness is often associated with antihistamines, anti-tussive (cough) medicines and muscle relaxants. Drowsiness can be exacerbated if medications are mixed with alcohol.

Skin Rashes and Dermatitis
Some topical medications, supplements and other medicines may lead to rashes or itchiness. A rash may be an indication of an allergic reaction. Severe allergic skin reactions may warrant cessation of certain medications and such side effects should be discussed with a doctor immediately. Vac-

cines also may cause pain or itching at injection sites, but that irritation tends to recede quickly.

Confusion or Restlessness
Medications such as decongestants may increase blood pressure and contribute to confusion, restlessness, and even insomnia. Decongestants, when taken in high doses, also can cause an intoxicating high, which is why they are so heavily regulated.

Weight Gain
Certain medications, particularly those that adjust hormone levels like contraceptives and many anti-anxiety and antidepressant medications, can lead to weight gain. Medications and supplements are often the most effective way to help individuals confront issues regarding their physical and mental health. However, if any side effects become bothersome, individuals should speak with a health-care provider to find out if there is an alternative or if the medication should be discontinued.

Did You Know?

Veterinarians and rescue organizations repeatedly stress the significance of having pets spayed or neutered. This process, which is a relatively minor procedure with an excellent recovery rate, renders the animals sterile so that they cannot reproduce. Many animal shelters will not even allow people to adopt pets before the dogs and cats have undergone the spay or neuter surgery. Prospective pet owners may wonder just why spaying and neutering is so important. Here are a few reasons.

▶ **Increased longevity:** A study that focused on Banfield Pet Hospitals' database of 2.2 million dogs and 460,000 cats found that, compared to animals which were not neutered or spayed, neutered male dogs lived 18 percent longer and spayed female dogs lived 23 percent longer, while spayed female cats in the study lived 39 percent longer and neutered male cats lived 62 percent longer.

▶ **Curbs unwanted behaviors:** Unaltered dogs and cats may roam to find mates, meow or bark, mark territory, and engage in other unwanted behaviors.

▶ **Prevents litters:** Undesired litters of puppies or kittens leads to overpopulation that can result in these animals being placed in shelters or humanely euthanized.

▶ **May prevent cancers:** Spaying or neutering can reduce the risk for certain cancers in animals, such as reproductive system cancer or pyometra. Undergoing the spaying and neutering process increases the likelihood that pets can live longer lives, and also helps reduce medical treatment costs.

There are several reasons to neuter and spay pets. Furthermore, it may be possible to find a low- or no-cost spay and neuter clinic to handle the procedure.

Simple Ways to Make Meals Healthier

Cooking foods at home is one of the simplest ways to gain greater control over personal health. Cooking at home is the easiest way to know precisely what you're putting into your body each day. Cooking your own meals also enables you to customize recipes so they align with any dietary restrictions or personal preferences you may have.

According to a 2021 survey by the consumer market research firm Hunter, 71 percent of people in the United States plan to continue cooking more at home after the pandemic ends. Increased creativity and confidence in the kitchen, as well as the fact that cooking at home helps to save money and enables one to eat healthier, is driving the ongoing increase in dining in.

When cooking at home, cooks can consider various tips to make meals that much healthier.

- ▶ **Increase fiber intake.** Fiber improves bowel regularity and helps a person feel full between meals. High fiber foods also help stabilize blood sugar levels. Two servings of fibrous foods at

each meal and an additional fiber-rich snack each day can ensure your body is getting the fiber it needs.

- ▶ **Slow down eating.** The pace at which a person eats a meal can affect his or her overall health. Healthline reports that fast eaters are more likely to eat more and have higher body mass indexes than slow eaters.
- ▶ **Choose whole grains.** Choosing whole grain breads or cereals over refined grains can make for a more nutritious diet. Whole grains are linked to a reduced risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
- ▶ **Swap Greek yogurt for other varieties.** Greek yogurt contains up to twice as much protein as regular yogurt, providing roughly 10 grams per 3.5 ounces. Protein along with fiber helps a person feel fuller longer, which can manage appetite and reduce overeating. Greek yogurt also can replace mayonnaise or sour cream in certain recipes.

▶ **Add a vegetable to every meal.** Vegetables are loaded with essential vitamins and minerals. Plus, they tend to be high in antioxidants that strengthen the immune system. Increase vegetable intake by eating vegetables with every meal.

▶ **Choose healthy fats.** While a person should minimize the amount of oils and other fats used during the cooking process, when it's necessary for a recipe, select the best fat possible. Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat that is packed with antioxidant polyphenols. It is considered a heart-healthy oil, and it may promote a healthy brain and memory function.

▶ **Cut out sweetened beverages.** Sodas and other sweetened drinks are leading sources of added sugar in diets. Opting for water or naturally sweetened fruit juices can improve overall health.

Small dietary changes can add up to big health benefits.

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Safe Ways To Lose Weight

People have many options when they seek to lose weight. Fad diets may promise quick results, but highly restrictive eating plans or marathon workout sessions can be dangerous. Taking shortcuts or risks in the hopes of losing weight can lead to various health issues and ultimately put people's overall health in serious jeopardy. Thankfully, there are many safe ways people can lose weight.

The first step in safe weight loss is to visit a doctor and let him or her know your plans. The doctor can help determine if a specific eating plan or exercise routine is safe based on your current health. Certain medications can affect metabolism and even contribute to weight gain, so a discussion with the doctor can help ensure people aren't putting their health in jeopardy when their goal is to get healthy.

It's also vital that people trying to lose weight do not believe everything they read online. Research published in The American Journal of Public Health in October 2014 found that most people who search the internet for tips on how to lose weight come across false or misleading information on weight loss, particularly in regard to how quickly they can shed some pounds. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises the safest amount of weight to lose per week is between one and two pounds. People who lose more per week, particularly on fad diets or programs, oftentimes are much more likely to regain weight later on than people who took more measured approaches to losing weight. In addition, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics notes it is better to lose weight gradually because if a person sheds pounds too fast, he or she can lose muscle, bone and water instead of fat.

The calories in, calories out concept is something to keep in mind when at-



tempting to lose weight. But metabolism and other factors, including body composition and physical activity levels, also are factors. How well one's body turns calories into fuel also needs to be considered. The best ways to experiment are to start slowly.

- ▲ **Calculate the average daily calories consumed in a day using a tracker.** This can be a digital app on a phone or simply writing down calories on a piece of paper. Track over a few days and see, on average, how many calories you've been consuming.
- ▲ **Notice extra calories.** Many diets can be derailed by eating extra calories that you don't realize you're consuming. That cookie a coworker insists you eat or the leftover mac-and-cheese from your toddler's plate can be sources of extra calories. Be mindful of what's being consumed, including sweetened beverages.
- ▲ **Explore the science.** According to the Scotland-based health service NHS Inform, one pound of fat contains 3,500 calories on average. Cutting calorie intake by 500 calories per day should see you lose

1 pound per week. The same goes in the other direction. Eating 500 more calories per day for a year can result in gaining close to 50 pounds. Small changes really add up.

- ▲ **Eat filling foods.** Choose low-calorie, high quality foods, like vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Meals that provide satiety can help eliminate between-meals snacks that can derail your weight loss efforts.
- ▲ **Seek support as a way to create accountability.** Share weight loss plans with a friend or relative who can help monitor your progress and keep you on track.
- ▲ **Incorporate strength training.** Good Housekeeping says the more lean muscle you have, the faster you can slim down. Start slowly with strength training, using free weights or body weights. Aim for strength workouts three to four times per week and alternate with calorie-blasting cardio.

Explore safer ways to lose weight, including taking a gradual approach that promotes long-term weight loss.

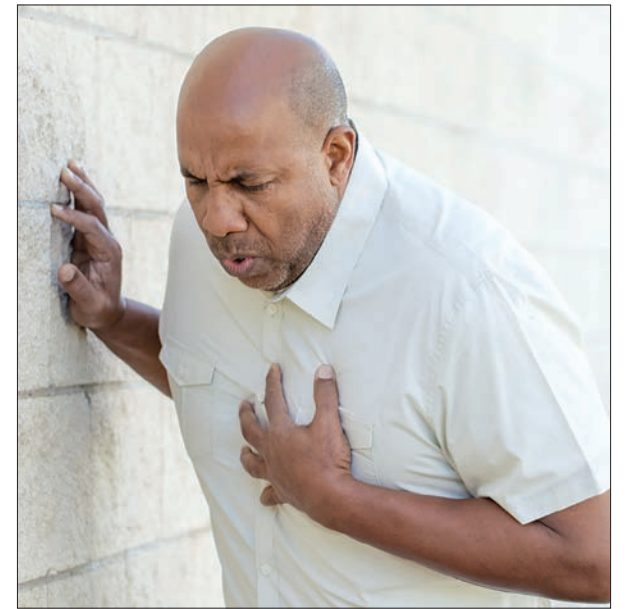
EARLY WARNING SIGNS FOR HEART DISEASE

Cardiovascular disease claims more lives across the globe every year than any other disease or condition, and many of those fatalities are credited to heart disease. Though the terms "cardiovascular disease" and "heart disease" are often used interchangeably, the National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute notes that, while all heart diseases are cardiovascular diseases, not all cardiovascular diseases are heart diseases. This is an important distinction, especially as adults discuss heart and cardiovascular health with their physicians.

The NHLBI reports that more than one in 10 American adults have been diagnosed with heart disease, which underscores the serious threat posed by the various conditions that fall under the umbrella of the condition. Though NHLBI data indicates around 630,000 Americans die from heart diseases each year, many of those deaths are preventable. The same goes for Canada, where data from the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System indicates that every hour roughly 14 Canadian adults age 20 and over with diagnosed heart disease lose their lives.

Education is one of the ways in which deaths due to heart disease can be prevented. That's especially true when individuals learn to recognize warning signs of the disease and take prompt action once such indicators appear.

▲ **Chest pain:** Discomfort between the neck and upper abdomen is characterized as chest pain, which does not necessarily indicate the presence of heart disease. However, the ex-



perts at Mount Sinai indicate that chest pain is the most common symptom of poor blood flow to the heart or a heart attack. Chest pain may occur because the heart isn't getting enough oxygen or blood. It's important that individuals recognize that the intensity of pain in the chest does not indicate the severity of the problem. That means that even mild discomfort in the chest should be brought to the attention of a physician immediately.

▲ **Shortness of breath:** Shortness of breath can occur because the heart isn't pumping blood as well as it should, thus causing blood to back up in the veins that go from the lungs to the heart. Mount Sinai notes that this results in fluid leaking into the lungs, thus producing shortness of breath. Shortness of breath can occur at any

time, including when individuals are active or at rest.

▲ **Coughing or wheezing:** Another indicator of fluid buildup in the lungs related to the heart is persistent coughing or wheezing. When coughing, individuals may spit up a pink or bloody mucus.

▲ **Swelling in the lower legs:** Mount Sinai notes that swelling in the legs, ankles or feet is another indicator of heart troubles. One of the byproducts of a poorly functioning heart is slower blood flow, and that reduction in flow can cause a backup in the veins of the legs. That backup can cause fluid to build up in the tissues, which leads to swelling.

Heart disease is a significant threat to public health. Learning to recognize signs of the disease can save an untold number of lives.

IMPORTANT REASONS TO VISIT A PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

It is vital to make personal health a priority. Despite that widely accepted truth, far too often people delay trips to see their doctors. The coronavirus pandemic only compounded this issue. An April 2020 report from Modern Healthcare found roughly one in three Americans delayed medical care as they coped with the financial loss and stress caused by COVID-19. A report from CTV indicated Canadian cancer diagnoses were down 16 percent from 2018 to 2020 due to closed facilities or fear of getting COVID-19 from medical offices.

Concerns about the pandemic are not the only reasons individuals may skip doctor visits. Some avoid going to the doctor due to fear of the unknown. Dr. Barbara Cox, a psychologist based in San Diego, told NBC News that it's common to feel reticent and anxious about going to the doctor. Around 3 percent of the population actually suffers from iatrophobia, the medical name for fear of doctors. Most just worry about getting bad news.

A refresher course on the benefits of visiting a primary care doctor may compel millions to schedule appointments and get back on top of their overall health.

▲ **Chronic disease man-**

agement: An individual with a chronic disease, such as kidney disease, diabetes or hypertension, should consult with a doctor about the ideal frequency of visits and to coordinate medication and testing with specialists.

▲ **Vaccines and shots:** Primary care providers (PCPs) offer routine vaccinations and can ensure that individuals are up-to-date on the immunizations they need to stay safe. Tetanus, diphtheria, shingles, pertussis, flu, and now COVID-19 vaccines are vital to overall health.

▲ **Medical referrals:** A PCP can assess a health situation and refer a patient to the correct specialist if more extensive care is needed. However, many chronic conditions can be monitored and addressed by a PCP.

▲ **Cancer screenings:** UW Medicine, which specializes in patient care, research and physician training in Seattle, says most people will need a few cancer screenings as they age, including colonoscopies, Pap smears, mammograms, and other important diagnostic tests for cancer. PCPs are usually the first line of

defense against cancer and can ensure patients receive the screenings they need.

▲ **Non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries:** Unless a situation is life-threatening or severe, thereby warranting a trip to the emergency room, most people can visit their PCPs for help treating a variety of conditions. When in doubt, individuals should first consult with their general practitioners about the right course of treatment.

▲ **Routine lab work:** Blood and urine tests often are part of annual well visit checks. Many PCP offices have phlebotomists on staff so that lab work can be conducted in the convenience of one place and then sent out for testing.

▲ **Work or sports physicals:** Certain employers require physical examinations, as do schools and recreational sports leagues. PCP offices are the place to go for these types of examinations, which are generally recommended annually.

Primary care physicians are often the first people to turn to for a bevy of health and wellness needs.



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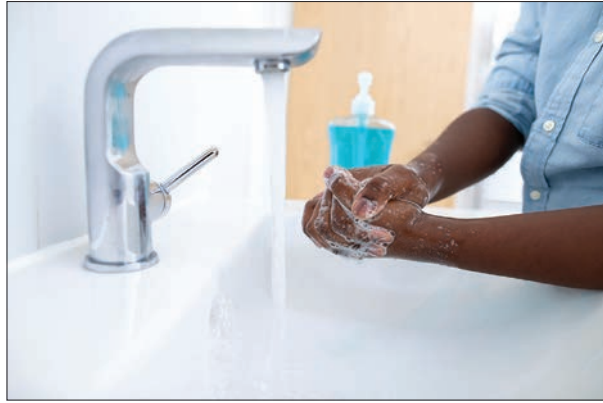
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TIPS TO PREPARE FOR FLU SEASON

Influenza is more common than people may realize. Data from the World Health Organization indicates there are around one billion cases of seasonal influenza each year. Though only a small fraction of those cases result in severe illness, even a mild case of the flu can be unpleasant and disruptive.

The phrase "flu prevention" may be somewhat misleading, as the best people can do is reduce their risk for seasonal influenza. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the best way to do that is to get vaccinated against the flu each year. Each year's flu shot is different, as researchers design the vaccination based on which strand of influenza they anticipate will be most prevalent in a given year. In addition to getting vaccinated, individuals can consider these tips, courtesy of the CDC, to protect themselves and others from the flu and stop the spread of germs.

- ▲ **Steer clear of close contact.** Individuals who are sick can steer clear of close contact with other people in order to safeguard them from the flu. On the flip side, people who live or work with individuals who have the flu can avoid close contact as well.
- ▲ **Don't be a hero.** The CDC urges anyone who is sick with the flu to stay home until their illness subsides. Avoid



going to school, work and running errands so you can help to prevent the virus from spreading.

- ▲ **Cover up.** The CDC notes that the flu virus spreads primarily through droplets produced when people with influenza cough, sneeze or talk. When around others, cover your mouth and nose, particularly when sneezing or coughing. When you have to sneeze or cough, do so into the cradle of your elbow. Coughing into your hands could help to spread the virus, as germs can transfer from your hand onto surfaces others may touch, like doorknobs and handles.
- ▲ **Routinely wash your hands.** Make it a habit to wash your hands regularly. When returning home, wash your hands before you do anything else. This is especially important when returning home from places

where lots of people tend to congregate, such as grocery stores and restaurants. Lathering hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds can help get rid of germs. If soap and water is not available, the CDC recommends using an alcohol-based hand rub.

- ▲ **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** The CDC notes that germs spread when people touch contaminated surfaces or objects and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. It's easy to touch your eyes, nose or mouth without even thinking about it, but make a concerted effort to avoid touching these areas to safeguard yourself and others from the flu.

Seasonal influenza can be a disruptive and potentially deadly force. Various practices can help people protect themselves and others from contracting the flu.

AVOID INFECTION WITH PROPER CONTACT LENS CARE

Contact lenses provide a convenient means to improving vision.

As contacts sit directly on the eyes, it is important to avoid the introduction of foreign matter to the eye with careful hygiene and other practices. WebMD reports that those who wear contacts have a higher risk for keratitis, an infection of the cornea caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi, and rare parasites. It's also easier to catch conjunctivitis. Smart contact lens usage can help people avoid infections and other eye irritation.

Contact wearers can follow these guidelines:

- ▲ **Wash hands before handling contacts.** Always wash and dry your

hands before touching contact lenses to avoid transferring microorganisms from your hands and fingers to the lenses.

- ▲ **Rub the lenses while cleaning.** Rubbing the lenses while cleaning them loosens the protein and bacteria that builds up. Even if the solution advertises "no rub," you should do it anyway.
- ▲ **Always use fresh solution.** Wash and store contacts in fresh, store-bought solution. Do not reuse solution, and never make homemade saline solution, which may not be sterile.
- ▲ **Consider daily lenses.** One way to cut down on the buildup of bacteria is to opt for daily lenses.

es. These are individually packaged and are only worn for one day before being discarded, as opposed to weekly or monthly lenses.

- ▲ **Rest your eyes.** Whenever possible, give your eyes a chance to "breathe," so to speak. Skip the contacts if you are at home and will not be encumbered by wearing eyeglasses. When utilizing contacts, do not wear them longer than is prescribed for that type of lens. Do not sleep in contacts unless they are designed for overnight wear.

Care must be given to contact lenses to avoid eye infections and other harmful conditions.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT RSV

Winter is synonymous with the holidays, snow and, of course, the common cold. Though colds are not exclusive to winter, they tend to be more common in the colder months of the year.

As cold season hits full swing, it's important to recognize that the common cold is not always behind those uncomfortable coughs and sniffles. Respiratory syncytial virus, often referred to as RSV, is a serious respiratory virus that produces symptoms similar to the common cold. Some basic knowledge of RSV can ensure people seek the treatment they need to overcome it.

What is RSV?

RSV is a virus that infects the lungs and respiratory tract. The American Lung Association® reports that RSV is common among children because they frequently come into physical contact with other kids.

When is RSV Most Likely to Occur?

The peak season for RSV is fall through spring. However, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment notes that RSV infections rose sharply in summer 2021. Though that

spike was likely due to a relaxation of coronavirus restrictions, it underscores that RSV can strike in summer.

What are the Symptoms of RSV?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that people infected with RSV typically exhibit symptoms within four to six days of infection. Such symptoms, which usually appear in stages and not all at once, may include:

- ▲ Runny nose
- ▲ Decrease in appetite
- ▲ Coughing
- ▲ Sneezing
- ▲ Fever
- ▲ Wheezing

Young infants with RSV may be irritable, less active and experience breathing difficulties. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in all infants, so symptoms should be taken seriously and brought to the attention of a child's pediatrician immediately. Symptoms like difficulty breathing, not drinking enough, decreased activity, nasal flaring, and bluish lips and fingernails require urgent care.

How is RSV Managed?

The CDC notes that antiviral medication is not typically part of a treatment for RSV, as most infections go away within a week or two without intervention. Symptoms such as fever and pain can be managed with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen (the CDC notes that aspirin should never be given to children). Drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and speaking with a physician prior to taking something to treat RSV is recommended.

Is There an RSV Vaccination?

The CDC recommends immunization for those most at risk of serious illness from RSV. High-risk groups include infants, toddlers and adults age 60 and older. Parents and older adults are urged to speak to their child's doctors and their own physicians about RSV vaccination.

RSV symptoms mirror those of the common cold, but the virus can be more serious than that. More information is available at cdc.gov and lung.org.

Don't Get Caught Off Guard By GLAUCOMA

Vision should never be taken for granted. Appreciating one's sense of sight involves scheduling routine eye exams and taking steps to protect one's eyes. But safeguarding vision also involves understanding the various conditions that can affect eye health.

Glaucoma is a group of eye disorders that can lead to progressive damage to the optic nerve. People who experience glaucoma can lose nerve tissue and eventually suffer vision loss. Understanding what contributes to glaucoma can help people take the steps necessary to reduce their risk.

The American Optometric Association says that glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness for people over the age of 60 - although it can occur at any age. The Mayo Clinic states that many forms of glaucoma produce no warning signs and changes in vision may occur so gradually they are not detected until the condition has reached an advanced stage.

There are various types

of glaucoma. However, primary open-angle glaucoma is the most common form, affecting about three million Americans, indicates the Glaucoma Research Foundation. Primary open-angle glaucoma occurs when the eye's drainage canals become clogged over time and fluid cannot drain out of the eye. As a result, intraocular pressure rises and damages the optic nerve, which is responsible for transmitting signals from the eye to the brain. People with a family history of glaucoma, African Americans over age 40 and Hispanics over the age of 60 have an increased risk, says the AOA. Those with thin corneas, which is the outer layer of the eye, also are at an elevated risk of developing glaucoma.

A less common type of glaucoma is called acute-closure glaucoma, which occurs due to an abrupt and rapid increase of eye pressure. This is an emergency situation that requires prompt care to prevent vision loss.

An eye doctor will conduct various tests to deter-

mine if a patient is at risk for glaucoma. The Mayo Clinic says tonometry is commonly used to measure intraocular pressure. During this test, the eye surface will be anesthetized with special drops. A tonometer will be applied lightly to the cornea, indenting it slightly. The resistance will be measured and calculated to determine if pressure is present. Other tests include the following:

- ▲ Imaging tests that look for optic nerve damage that involve a dilated eye examination
- ▲ Visual field tests to check for areas of vision loss
- ▲ Pachymetry, which measures corneal thickness
- ▲ An inspection of the drainage angle of the eye with thin corneas, which is the outer layer of the eye, also are at an elevated risk of developing glaucoma.

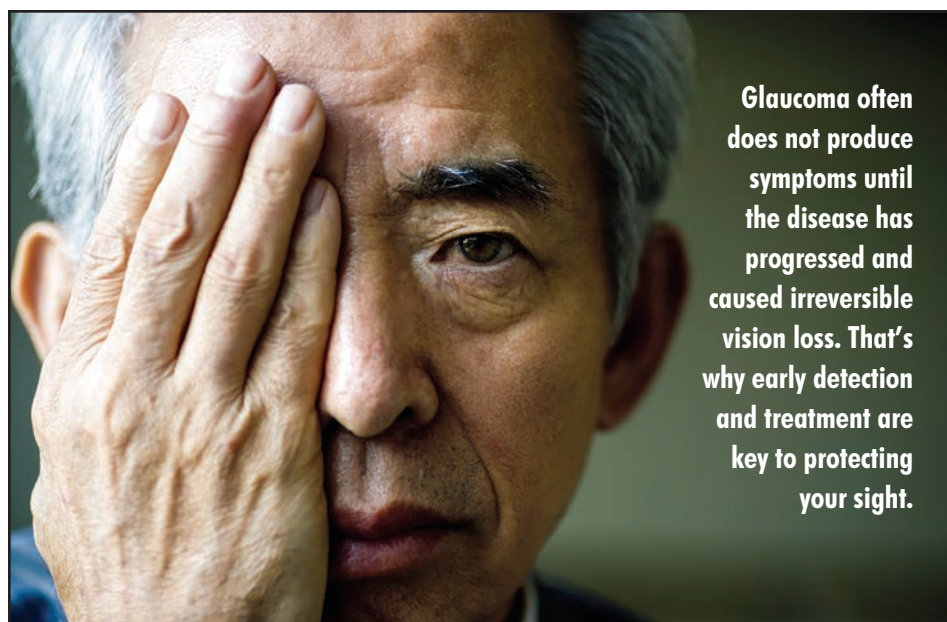
The effects of glaucoma cannot be reversed, but early. Medications and lifestyle changes, like more frequent eye exams, can improve symptoms. Prescription eye drops can reduce the production of aqueous humor (fluid) in the eye and improve outflow of that fluid. Oral medications and surgery are other options as well.

Did You Know?

A good joke can liven up any social engagement, but the value of humor goes well beyond breaking the ice at parties and other

get-togethers. According to the Cleveland Clinic, laughter can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to

lower heart rate and help people breathe more easily. Given such benefits, it's no surprise that laughter has been linked to a host of medical benefits, including stress relief and improved heart health.



Glaucoma often does not produce symptoms until the disease has progressed and caused irreversible vision loss. That's why early detection and treatment are key to protecting your sight.

You May Not See Glaucoma Coming... But We Will.

If you're age 50 or older, or if you have diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of glaucoma, talk to us today to learn more and determine the screening schedule that's right for you.

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Symptoms Suggestive of Cataracts

The eyes are amazing organs that utilize various parts working in conjunction with one another. When working correctly, eyes enable crisp vision and process a vast array of vivid hues. When the eyes are compromised by illness or other conditions, various impairments may be the culprit.

Cataracts often affect aging individuals. A cataract forms when the natural lens in the eye, which is responsible for refracting light rays that come in the eye to help a person see, becomes cloudy. As a result, vision can be compromised and seem like a person is looking through a foggy or dirty car windshield.

The National Eye Institute advises that cataracts are common as people get older. More than half of Americans 80 years or older either have cataracts or have had surgery to remove cataracts. Cataracts may initially produce mild symptoms of blurry or hazy vision, or surroundings may seem less colorful. Over time, it can lead to vision loss if not treated. The following

are some common symptoms of cataracts:

- ▲ Cloudy or blurry vision
- ▲ Colors look faded
- ▲ Compromised night vision
- ▲ Halos appear around lights
- ▲ Headlights, lamps, or sunlight seem too bright
- ▲ Double vision
- ▲ Frequent changes to visit prescriptions

Researchers have identified certain things that may lead to the formation of cataracts: exposure to ultraviolet, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, smoking, and prolonged use of corticosteroid medications.

All About Vision says cataracts can be broken down into various types:

- ▲ **Nuclear:** These cataracts are the most common and form in the center of the lens, gradually worsening.
- ▲ **Cortical:** Cortical cataracts generally start as spoke-like opaque areas at

the edges of the lens that grow inward. They tend to be responsible for more night glare.

- ▲ **Congenital:** Some people are born with cataracts.
- ▲ **Trauma-induced:** These cataracts form anywhere and often develop into a rosette shape.
- ▲ **Post subcapsular cataracts:** Initially developing at the central back surface of the lens, these cataracts often develop faster than other types. Vision around bright light and colors is affected.

Eye doctors generally diagnose cataracts during dilated eye exams. The NEI says anyone age 60 or older should get dilated eye exams every one to two years. Surgery may be recommended only at the point when cataracts start to severely interfere with daily activities. Until then, people can mitigate cataracts by updating eyeglass prescriptions, turning lights up when possible and wearing anti-glare sunglasses.

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VARIOUS TYPES OF ARTHRITIS

Arthritis is a broad term that encompasses at least 100 different subtypes of the condition. Each has different causes and treatment methods, but some are more common than others.

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases says “arthritis” means “joint inflammation.” Joints are where two bones meet. Common symptoms of arthritis include pain, stiffness, swelling, and redness in and around the joints. Arthritis is the No. 1 cause of disability in United States. While it mainly affects the bones, it also can damage other parts of the body, including organs.

The following are common types of arthritis.

Osteoarthritis

Healthline says osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common type of arthritis in the U.S. It develops after the age of 50 or 60 years, and tends to be more prevalent in individuals who are overweight. With OA, joint pain tends to occur after rest or inactivity. It is a degenerative joint disease in which the tissues break down over time.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Unlike OA, which is marked by a breakdown of joint tissue over time, RA is a chronic autoimmune disease in which the body's own immune system attacks the joints and other tissues. It can also cause medical problems in other areas such as the eyes, lungs, blood, nerves, and heart.

RA is more common in women than men, and people are likely to get the disease if there is a family history of it.

Psoriatic Arthritis

Psoriatic arthritis is another inflammatory condition linked to an autoimmune disorder. Individuals with the skin condition psoriasis can develop psoriatic arthritis after skin symptoms occur. It is believed that stressful events, trauma to the joints or bones or infections may trigger the disease in those who already have psoriasis.

Gout

Gout is a type of arthritis that causes flares, often beginning in the big toe or a lower limb. It occurs when a high level of serum urate

builds up in the body, which then forms needle-shaped crystals in and around the joint. Gout usually happens in middle age, with men developing it earlier than women. Some people with gout may be more likely to develop chronic kidney disease, obesity, hypertension, and diabetes.

Treatment

Doctors will ask questions and perform blood tests to check for arthritis markers. A general practitioner may recommend a patient see a rheumatologist to get a better diagnosis as well as a treatment plan.

Treatments include analgesic medications, anti-inflammatory drugs such as NSAID or steroid formulations, capsaicin creams to block pain signals, or immunosuppressants and biologics if arthritis is autoimmune in nature.

While there's no cure or way to prevent arthritis, exercising, losing weight, managing stress, and eating healthy foods could limit symptoms. Working with a doctor also can help manage arthritis.

THE BENEFITS OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE

Chiropractic care is a form of complementary medicine in which a licensed chiropractic doctor uses his or her hands as well as certain machinery to manipulate joints in the body.

Subluxation is a term used in chiropractic medicine that refers to the misalignment of vertebrae or joints. Subluxation can occur from injury, repetitive motion or certain medical issues, says Verywell Health. When joints do not work properly, range of motion can be compromised and chronic pain may present in the joint or elsewhere in the body.

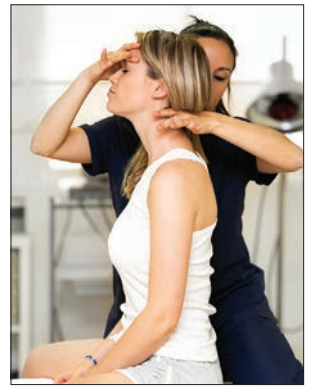
Chiropractic care can be instrumental in helping a person feel better without having to take pain medications. Chiropractors can treat musculoskeletal pain anywhere in the body, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Adjustments can gently realign joints to decrease pain and increase range of motion.

Soft-tissue therapy may be used to relax tight muscles and relieve spasms. A chiropractor also may be able to advise as to exercises and stretches that can maintain joint stability and mobility.

Chiropractic treatment also may decrease tension and boost blood circulation, which could help reduce stressful feelings in the body. Similarly, such treatment may alleviate tension headaches and migraines by realigning the joints in the neck and back that may be contributing to the headaches.

Healthline reports a possible reduction of osteoarthritis symptoms from chiropractic care as well. When joints are properly aligned, it will reduce how much bones rub together.

One of the more profound benefits of chiropractic adjustment is the potential to reduce reliance on opioid drugs prescribed to relieve



pain. Because of the efficacy of opioids, people can easily find themselves addicted to them. When their prescriptions are up, they may turn to illegal opioids to chase the pain relief and high they have grown accustomed to. The National Institute on Drug Abuse says more than 106,000 drug overdoses deaths were reported in 2021, and synthetic opioid deaths (primarily fentanyl) continue to rise, advises the NIDA.

Chiropractic care can help people live fuller lives without pain. Individuals with remaining questions can speak with their doctors about chiropractic medicine.

Alleviate Everyday Aches, Pains

Pain occurs for a variety of reasons. It may be a by-product of overuse of a part of the body, it could signal an underlying condition, or it could be the result of an injury.

Discomfort can be remedied with some techniques.

▲ **Get moving.** Lower back pain is common among adults in their mid-30s and 40s. Strength training and cardio exercises can remedy this pain because these activities increase blood flow and help build core muscles, which support the spine. Support can alleviate pressure on the discs in the back.

▲ **Practice good posture.** Sitting and standing with optimal posture can help the body feel better. The body is designed to stand in a “neutral” position that stacks the pelvis, head and torso.

When posture is out of whack, this puts undue stress on muscles, leading to pain. Dropping your head or shoulders also can create tension that leads to headaches.

▲ **Exercise more often.** Certain pains arise when exercising for the first time or performing a new activity. When you do the same activity again and again, your muscles will start to get used to it and soreness will be reduced. Don't give up on exercise too soon, but include off days to give your body time to become more acclimated to increased physical activity.

▲ **Get tested.** Speak with your doctor if you have chronic pain in one or more areas. It may be a sign of osteoarthritis, an inflammatory condition that is associated

with aging. Rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune conditions can cause aches and pains as well, leaving the joints and tendons inflamed. A doctor can rule out these conditions or help you get the therapy and medications you need.

▲ **Increase stretching and movement exercises.** Incorporate stretching and movement exercises like yoga or tai chi into your daily regimen. These activities stretch areas of the body to improve range of motion and flexibility over time.

These are just a few ways to address common aches and pains. Medical interventions, physical therapy, occupational therapy and ergonomics assessments, and massage therapy also may help to alleviate aches and pains.

FIBROMYALGIA TREATMENT OPTIONS

Fibromyalgia is a clinical syndrome that presents as widespread body pain. If left untreated, fibromyalgia is a potentially debilitating condition.

Middle age women are especially vulnerable to fibromyalgia, and early diagnosis is key so that treatments can begin. Treatment is likely to be more effective if introduced early, according to a 2017 study in the journal Australian Prescriber.

The Mayo Clinic says doctors attempting to diagnose pain used to check 18 specific points on the body to determine if pain was linked to fibromyalgia. However, newer guidelines from the American College of Rheumatology no longer require a tender point exam for diagnosis. Instead, the condition is considered present when widespread pain throughout the body lasts for at least

three months.

Newly diagnosed fibromyalgia patients may have many questions about the illness and their treatment options. Fibromyalgia symptoms wax and wane, so Johns Hopkins Medicine says treatment strategies continually need to evolve and are tailored specifically to each patient's needs. However, treatment strategies tend to fall into four broad categories: education; symptom management; cognitive behavior therapy; and complementary approaches.

Symptom management tends to include a variety of medications. The Mayo Clinic says doctors will recommend pain relievers such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen and naproxen sodium, which are available over-the-counter. Opioid pain relievers usually are not recommended because of side effects and risk for dependence.

Antidepressants are the most frequently used and best studied drugs for the treatment of fibromyalgia, indicates Johns Hopkins. They are effective in treating pain, sleep disturbances, fatigue, and depression. Anti-seizure drugs often are useful to reduce certain types of pain.

In addition to medications, complementary approaches include physical therapy, acupuncture, massage, acupuncture, hypnosis, osteopathic manipulation, and other techniques. Cognitive behavior therapy also may help those with fibromyalgia manage their condition by applying relaxation therapy and cognitive pain management, among other techniques.

Speaking with a mental health counselor also can give individuals additional tools for dealing with painful and stressful situations that arise due to fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia affects many people, notably women. There is no cure, but various treatments can relieve pain and assist with other symptoms.

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