



the Advocacy Alliance
A Mental Health Association
Toll Free 1-877-315-6855
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EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT

IT'S YOUR HEALTH

WINTER 2006



December is Seasonal Depression Awareness Month

A large segment of the population becomes depressed as the days get shorter.

The most important factor in seasonal depression seems to be day length. Some research suggests that the brain may produce less serotonin in some people during short days. It is estimated that SAD affects less than 1% of the population in Florida, while in

Alaska as many as 10% of people may suffer.

One of the most effective treatments is bright light therapy. Sitting under a high intensity bright light for 30 minutes every morning can help people who get depressed in the winter. These lights are available from a number of sources and research suggests that they do not have to be "full spectrum" lights in order to improve mood. The most important ingredient seems to be the intensity of the light. The light should mimic the brightness of being outdoors on a sunny day.



Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Include:



Depressed mood

Fatigue and lack of energy

Sleeping much more than usual, increased need for sleep or difficulty awakening in the morning

Increased appetite, often including carbohydrate cravings

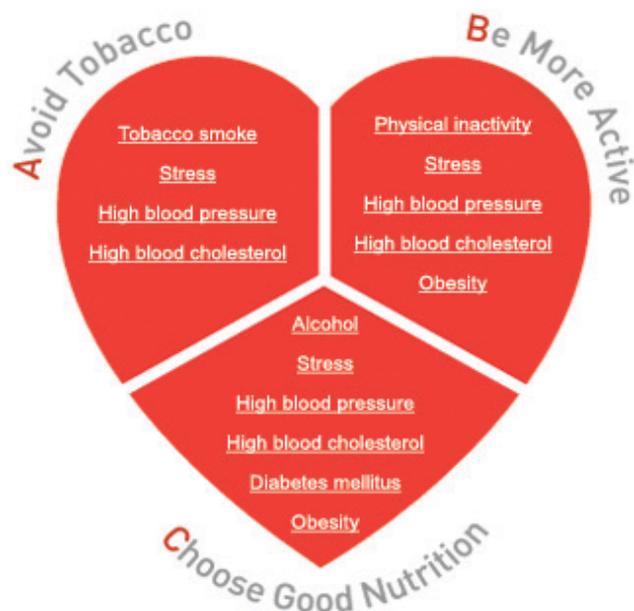
Weight gain

Reduced work productivity

February is Heart Month

Why are coronary heart disease and stroke the No. 1 and No. 3 killers of Americans?

One reason is undeniably a lack of commitment to a heart-healthy lifestyle. Your lifestyle is not only your best defense against heart disease and stroke, it's also your responsibility. By following these simple steps you can reduce all of the modifiable risk factors for heart disease, heart attack and stroke including:



Stop smoking.

If you smoke, quit. If someone in your household smokes, encourage them to quit. We know it's tough. But it's tougher to recover from a heart attack or stroke or to live with chronic heart disease. Commit to quit. We're here to help if you need it.



Reduce blood cholesterol.

Fat lodged in your arteries is a disaster waiting to happen. Sooner or later it could trigger a heart attack or stroke. You've got to reduce your intake of saturated and trans fat and get moving. If diet and exercise alone don't get those numbers down, then medication is the key. Take it just like the doctor orders.

Lower high blood pressure.



It's the single largest risk factor for stroke. Stroke is the No. 3 killer and one of the leading causes of disability in the United States. Stroke recovery is difficult at best and you could be disabled for life. Shake that salt habit, take any medication the doctor recommends exactly as prescribed and get moving. Those numbers need to get down and stay down. Your goal is less than 120/80 mmHg.

Be physically active every day.

Research has shown that getting 30–60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week can help lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol and keep your weight at a healthy level. But something is better than nothing. If you're doing nothing now, start out slow. Studies show that people who have achieved even a moderate level of fitness are much less likely to die early than those with a low fitness level.





Aim for a healthy weight.

Obesity is an epidemic in America, not only for adults but also for children. Fad diets and supplements are not the answer. Good nutrition and physical activity are the only way to maintain a healthy weight. Obesity places you at risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and insulin resistance, a precursor of type 2 diabetes – the very factors that heighten your risk of cardiovascular disease. Your Body Mass Index (BMI) will tell you if your weight is healthy.

Manage diabetes.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of diabetes-related death. People with diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease due to a variety of risk factors, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity and lack of physical activity.

Reduce stress.

Some scientists have noted a relationship between coronary heart disease risk and stress in a person's life that may affect the risk factors for heart disease and stroke. For example, people under stress may overeat, start smoking or smoke more than they otherwise would. Research has even shown that stress reaction in young adults predicts middle-age blood pressure risk.



Limit alcohol.

Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure, cause heart failure and lead to stroke. It can contribute to high triglycerides, produce irregular heartbeats and affect cancer and other diseases. It contributes to obesity, alcoholism, suicide and accidents.



Links to Check Out

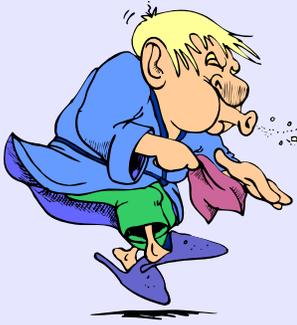
www.preventblindness.org (Prevent Blindness America)

www.americanheart.org (American Heart Association)

www.sada.org (Seasonal Affective Disorder)

www.nosad.org (National Organization for Seasonal Affective Disorder)

12 Tips to Treat Colds and the Flu



1. Know When Not To Treat Symptoms

Believe it or not, those annoying symptoms you're experiencing are part of the natural healing process -- evidence that the immune system is battling illness. For instance, a fever is your body's way of trying to kill viruses in a hotter-than-normal environment. Also, a fever's hot environment makes germ-killing proteins in your blood circulate more quickly and effectively. Thus, if you endure a moderate fever for a day or two, you may actually get well faster. Coughing is another productive symptom; it clears your breathing passages of thick mucus that can carry germs to your lungs and the rest of your body. Even that stuffy nose is best treated mildly or not at all. A decongestant, like Sudafed, restricts flow to the blood vessels in your nose and throat. But often you want the increase blood flow because it warms the infected area and helps secretions carry germs out of your body.

2. Blow Your Nose Often (and the Right Way)

It's important to blow your nose regularly when you have a cold rather than sniffing mucus back into your head. But when you blow hard, pressure can carry germ-carrying phlegm back into your ear passages, causing earache. The best way to blow your nose: Press a finger over one nostril while you blow *gently* to clear the other.



3. Treat That Stuffy Nose With Warm Salt Water

Salt-water rinsing helps break nasal congestion, while also removing virus particles and bacteria from your nose. Here's a popular recipe:



Mix 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon baking soda in 8 ounces of warm water. Use a bulb syringe to squirt water into the nose. Hold one nostril closed by applying light finger pressure while squirting the salt mixture into the other nostril. Let it drain.

Repeat 2-3 times, then treat the other nostril.

4. Stay Warm and Rested

Staying warm and resting when you first come down with a cold or the flu helps your body direct its energy toward the immune battle. This battle taxes the body. So give it a little help by lying down under a blanket.



5. Gargle

Gargling can moisten a sore throat and bring temporary relief. Try a teaspoon of salt dissolved in warm water, four times daily. To reduce the tickle in your throat, try an astringent gargle -- such as tea that contains tannin -- to tighten the membranes. Or use a thick, viscous gargle made with honey, popular in folk medicine: steep one tablespoon of raspberry leaves or lemon juice in two cups of hot water; mix with one teaspoon of honey. Let the mixture cool to room temperature before gargling.



6. Drink Hot Liquids

Hot liquids relieve nasal congestion, prevent dehydration, and soothe the uncomfortably inflamed membranes that line your nose and throat. If you're so congested you can't sleep at night, try a hot toddy, an age-old remedy: make a cup of hot herbal tea, add one teaspoon of honey and 1 small shot (about 1 ounce) of whiskey or bourbon. Limit yourself to one. Too much alcohol inflames those membranes and is counterproductive.



7. Take a Steamy Shower

Steamy showers moisturize your nasal passages and relax you. If you're dizzy from the flu, run a steamy shower while you sit on a chair nearby and take a sponge bath.

8. Use a Salve Under Your Nose

A small dab of mentholated salve under your nose can open breathing passages and help restore the irritated skin at the base of the nose. Menthol, eucalyptus and camphor all have mild numbing ingredients that may help relieve the pain of a nose rubbed raw.

9. Apply Hot or Cold Packs Around Your Congested Sinuses

Either temperature works. You can buy reusable hot or cold packs at a drugstore or make your own: take a damp washcloth and heat it for 55 seconds in a microwave (test the temperature first to make sure it's right for you) or take a small bag of frozen peas to use as a cold pack.

10. Sleep With an Extra Pillow Under Your Head

This will help relieve congested nasal passages. If the angle is too awkward, try placing the pillows between the mattress and the box springs to create a more gradual slope.



11. Don't Fly Unless Necessary

There's no point adding stress to your already stressed-out upper respiratory system and that's what the change in air pressure will do. Flying with cold or flu congestion can temporarily damage your eardrums as a result of pressure changes during takeoff and landing. If you must fly, use a decongestant and carry a nasal spray with you to use just before takeoff and landing. Chewing gum and swallowing frequently can also help relieve pressure.



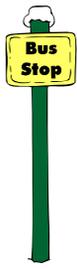
12. Eat Infection-Fighting Foods

Here are some good foods to eat when you're battling a cold or flu:

- Bananas: Soothe upset stomachs.
- Bell Peppers: Loaded with vitamin C.
- Blueberries: Curbs diarrhea, high in natural aspirin (may lower fevers and help with the aches and pains).
- Carrots: Loaded with beta-carotene.
- Chili Peppers: Can open sinuses and help break up mucus in the lungs.
- Cranberries: Help prevent bacteria from sticking to cells lining the bladder and urinary tract.
- Mustard & Horseradish: Helps break up mucus in air passages.
- Onion: Has phytochemicals purported to help the body clear bronchitis and other infections.
- Rice: Curbs diarrhea.
- Tea: Black and green tea (not herbals) contain catechin, a phytochemical purported to have natural antibiotic and anti-diarrhea effects.



Remember, serious conditions can masquerade as the common cold: sinus infections, bronchitis, meningitis, strep throat, and asthma. If you have severe symptoms, or feel sicker with each passing day, call your doctor.



Brrrr... Winter is here!

If you must go outside, here some safety measures to follow during inclement weather:

Avoid overexertion. Cold weather itself, without any physical exertion, puts an extra strain on the heart. If you add to this the strain of heavy physical activity such as shoveling snow, pushing an automobile or even walking too fast or too far, you risk damaging your body.

Dress warmly in loose-fitting, layered, lightweight clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven and water repellent. Wear a hat. Protect your face and cover you mouth to protect your lungs from very cold air. Wear mittens instead of gloves--they allow your fingers to move freely in contact with one another and will keep your hands much warmer.



Watch for frostbite. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, tip of nose and ear lobes. If such symptoms are detected, get medical attention immediately. The best treatment for frostbite is the re-warming of the affected tissue.

Keep yourself and your clothes dry. Change wet socks and all other wet clothing as quickly as possible to prevent loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.

In addition to the obvious inconveniences snow, ice and cold weather cause they can also have deadly consequences. It is important that you:

Signs of Cold Weather Exposure

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Vague, slow, slurred speech
- Memory lapses; incoherence
- Immobile, fumbling hands
- Frequent stumbling; lurching gait
- Drowsiness
- Apparent exhaustion; inability to get up after a rest

Keep your driveway and walks clear so that firefighters and medics can reach your house if you need them.



Ensure all private roads are kept clear so fire apparatus and ambulances can reach your home.

Remove all snow and ice adjacent to emergency exits, especially those exits that are infrequently used.



Treatment for Cold Weather Exposure

❄ Get the person into dry clothing and into a warm bed or sleeping bag with a "hot" water bottle (which should actually be only warm to the touch, not hot), warm towels, heating pad, or some other such heat source.

❄ Concentrate heat on the trunk of the body first -- that is, the shoulders, chest and stomach.

❄ Keep the head low and the feet up to get warm blood circulating to the head.

❄ Give the person warm drinks.

❄ Keep the person quiet. Do not jostle, massage, or rub.

❄ If symptoms are extreme, call for professional medical assistance immediately.





January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month

Headaches could be a sign of poor vision or even of glaucoma, a treatable disease if it is caught early. The problem with detecting glaucoma is its lack of symptoms. In fact, The Glaucoma Foundation calls it “the sneak thief of sight”. Robert Ritch, M.D., Medical Director of the foundation, claims that 90% of the 80,000+ Americans who have lost their sight to glaucoma might still be able to see if they had learned of it early and been treated.

Glaucoma is not just a disease of the senior years. Anyone of any age can get it. However, some of us are at higher risk, including you if you:

- are 45+ and haven't had regular eye exams
- have a family history of glaucoma
- are of African descent
- have diabetes
- are nearsighted
- have been on steroid/cortisone medications regularly for some time
- have had an eye injury



Actually, glaucoma isn't just one disease. It's a class of eye diseases marked by optic nerve damage and loss of visual field (how big an area you see without moving your eyes or head). One type, angle-closure glaucoma, can happen suddenly. Its symptoms include morning headaches, severe pain, red eyes, blurry vision, and seeing halos around lights.

How often should you have an eye exam? If you're under 45 and have no risk factors, you can get by with every 4 years unless you develop a problem. If you are under 45 and have risk factors, every 2 years, the same as for people 45+ who don't have risk factors. Those people 45 or older who do have risk factors should have an annual eye exam.

Low Fat Holiday Sugar Cookies

5 tbsp butter, softened	1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup sugar	1 egg
1 tsp vanilla extract	1 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp salt	

Using a mixer, beat butter and sugar until creamy. Add egg and vanilla, mixing well. In another bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt. Gradually stir flour mixture into butter and sugar until dough forms.

Wrap dough in plastic and chill for two hours in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to a 1/4 inch or 1/8 inch thickness. Use holiday cookie cutters dipped in flour to make cutouts. Gather scraps and re-roll until all the dough is used.

Place cookies 1 inch apart on a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes or until the edges are lightly browned. Transfer to wire rack after 1 minute to cool.

Makes 30 cookies, depending on size of cookie cutters used.

Per serving: Calories 65, Calories from Fat 20, Total Fat 2.2g (sat 1.3g), Cholesterol 12mg, Sodium 38mg, Carbohydrate 10.3g, Fiber 0.2g, Protein 1g



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A Mental Health Association
the Advocacy Alliance



SAVE THE DATE!

Larry Lipsitz will be speaking on Autism in individuals with Mental Retardation on the following dates:

April 17, 2007
Four Points Sheraton
Allentown, PA
and
April 18, 2007
Victoria Inns
Pittston, PA

IDEAS FOR OUR NEWSLETTER?



Contact Heather Coleman, M.A.,
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with your suggestions.