Healthy People Newsletter

APRIL 2019

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ONEDIGITAL HEALTH AND BENEFITS

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National Health Observances

APRIL | 2019

Autism Awareness Month

Donate Life Month

Occupational Therapy Month

Sexually Transmitted Infections Awareness Month

Sports Eye Safety Month

Women's Eye Health and Safety Month

Public Health Week (1-7)

Health Day (7)

Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week (7-14)

Healthcare Decisions Day (16)

Transplant Nurses Day (17)

Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (21-27)

Medical Fitness Week (22-28)

BETTERSAFE
WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY



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BREATHE EASY

How to Minimize Air Polutants

Even though you can't see it, the air you breathe can affect your health. Polluted air can cause difficulty breathing, flare-ups of allergy or asthma, and other lung problems. Long-term exposure to air pollution can raise the risk of other diseases, including heart disease and cancer.

Whether outdoors or indoors, the effects of air pollution are most obvious for those who already have difficulty breathing. All people are likely susceptible to the adverse effects of air pollution, but people who have chronic lung diseases such as asthma are more susceptible.

OUTDOOR POLLUTANTS

Several different types of pollutants can affect your health. When the weather is warm, an invisible gas called ozone can make it harder for some people to breathe. This gas is created when sunlight triggers a chemical reaction between oxygen and certain pollutants from cars, factories, and other sources.

Ozone can irritate the lining of your airways and lungs. People with asthma and other lung conditions are more likely to feel its effects.

Another type of outdoor pollutant that affects health is particulates. These are fine and coarse particles that are released when fuel is burned. They can come from things like cars, power plants, and wildfires. Research has linked particulates to short- and long-term lung problems.

To track these and other harmful pollutants, air quality monitors have been set up at over 1,000 locations across the country. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency uses these monitors to produce the Air Quality Index (AQI). The index can be found online at www.airnow.gov.

People who are sensitive to outdoor pollution may want to use the AQI to track when levels are high. This information can help you make choices about when to do outdoor activities.

INDOOR POLLUTANTS

Indoor air pollution can be harmful, too. It can come from many sources. Secondhand tobacco smoke contains tiny particles that can hurt your lungs. Gas stoves and appliances can create harmful gases.

Pets and pests (such as mice and cockroaches) can shed substances, called allergens, that cause allergies. Mold and dust mites also produce allergens. Even furniture and cleaning products can release harmful compounds into the air.

One good thing about indoor air pollution is that many causes can be removed or changed. Indeed, it's difficult to change the outdoor environment, but indoors is more contained.

A simple tool for many homes is making sure inside air has a chance to escape. Ventilating your house, such as opening windows, can actually lower the air pollution levels inside, and it really doesn't cost anything. This strategy may not work on days when outdoor pollution is very high, though. Paying attention to the AQI or other measures of outdoor air quality can help you decide when to let inside air out.

To reduce the effects of poor quality air on your health:

» **Avoid outdoor activities in the afternoons on warm days,** when the risk of air pollution is highest.

» **Avoid strenuous outdoor activities if the air is polluted.** Check your region's air quality index. Orange and red mean it's a bad air day, so people with lung problems should avoid the outdoors. Purple and maroon mean air pollution is extreme, and everyone should try to stay in an indoor environment with clean air.

» **Reduce pollutants in your home.** Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Avoid burning candles, incense, or wood fires. Run fans or open a window when cooking. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter instead of sweeping to avoid stirring up dust and allergens



DAY IN DAY OUT
WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

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BODY ODOR

Harmless or a Sign of Something More Serious?

Did anyone ever tell you that you smell bad? Funky breath or stinky underarms can happen to anyone, at any age. Whether or not you've noticed them, some body odors can signal a health problem. But most breath and body odors are normal.

Bad breath is most often caused by bacteria on the teeth and tongue. It's normal if your breath smells a little in the morning, especially if you slept with your mouth open. A dry mouth allows bacteria to thrive. Bacteria that live in the mouth can make compounds that have sulfur. These compounds are especially stinky. They can smell like rotten eggs or onion, for example.

If bad breath isn't cleared up by brushing your teeth or using mouthwash, it may be a sign of another issue. Over time, bacteria can cause tooth decay and gum disease. Decay and gum disease do not smell good. Both require a trip to the dentist for treatment.

Other causes of foul breath odor may be sinus, throat, or lung infections. These need to be treated by a health care professional, too.

Your breath can also carry clues of disease from other parts of your body. That's because you exhale more than just air. Your breath also contains gassy compounds that move from your organs through the bloodstream into your lungs.

Breath that smells fruity or like rotten apples, for example, can be a sign of diabetes that's not under control.

Rarely, people can have bad breath because of organ failure. A person with kidney failure may have breath that smells like ammonia or urine. Serious liver disease can make breath smell musty or like garlic and rotten eggs.

Compounds that are transported through the blood can also be released through your sweat glands. That can

make your armpits and skin smell bad. It's normal for stress to cause smelly compounds to be released through your sweat.

But your armpits can smell for other reasons too. Both moisture and hair enable bacteria to thrive. These bacteria can make smelly compounds. Bathing, shaving, and deodorant can help keep these odors in check.

If you're concerned about a new or worsening body odor, a trip to the doctor for evaluation is always the first step. Bad breath is best assessed by a dentist.

Your dentist can examine your mouth for signs of trouble. If body odor is your concern, your doctor can conduct a physical exam. If needed, your doctor can suggest further tests.

A trial of avoiding foods that are known to cause body odor may be considered. In rare cases of body odor due to an underlying medical condition, the treatment of that condition may help to manage the odor as well.

TO PREVENT STRONG BREATH OR BODY ODOR:

- Bathe, wear clean clothes, and use deodorant.
- Clean and care for your teeth and mouth.
- Keep your mouth moist and your body dry.
- Avoid eating onions, garlic, and other strong-smelling foods.

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TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN



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THE ACHES & PAINS OF ARTHRITIS

and What You Can Do About It

Many people start to feel pain and stiffness in their joints as they get older, often when they're 45 to 50. It's called arthritis, and it's one of the most common diseases nationwide. You may think it's a disease of old age, but arthritis can affect young adults and even children. In recent years, scientists have made rapid progress in understanding the many causes of arthritis. They've also made significant strides in developing effective new treatments for many forms of the disease.

WHAT EXACTLY IS ARTHRITIS?

"Arthr" means joint, and "itis" means inflammation—heat, swelling, and redness. But the inflammation of arthritis isn't always something you can see. Arthritis comes in many forms. In fact, there are more than 100 types, each with its own symptoms and treatments. The most common form of arthritis is osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis occurs when cartilage, the tissue that cushions the ends of the bones within the joints, breaks down and wears away. It most often affects the fingers, knees, and hips. Osteoarthritis can follow injury to a joint. For example, years after a soccer injury to a knee, you might get osteoarthritis in the knee. Once you've had a severe joint injury, it's important to be careful about what kind of activities you do.

For the most part, researchers don't know a lot about how and why osteoarthritis occurs. Women tend to get it more often than men. You tend to get it as you get older, but some risk factors are under your control, including your weight. Even moderately overweight people have an increase in knee osteoarthritis.

TYPES OF ARTHRITIS & TREATMENTS

Many treatments are available for osteoarthritis. Talk to your doctor about exercises that can help and activities you should avoid. Several pain and anti-inflammatory medicines are available by prescription or over the counter.

Another common type of arthritis is gout. Gout usually affects the big toe, but many other joints may be involved. It's caused by needle-like crystals that build up in the joints.

People with gout might try to avoid certain foods—including liver, beef, anchovies, and meat gravy—because they can bring on a gout attack in some people. These foods are rich in molecules called purines, which break down in your body and can ultimately contribute to crystal formation. Drinking alcohol, being overweight, and taking certain medications may make gout worse. In older people, some blood pressure medicines can also increase the chance of a gout attack.

Your doctor might do blood tests and X-rays to find out if you have gout. If you are diagnosed with gout, it can be treated several different ways, often in combination.

A very different type of arthritis is called rheumatoid arthritis. In contrast to osteoarthritis and gout, which affect particular joints, rheumatoid arthritis can affect your whole body. It arises when your immune system mistakenly attacks your own joints. That can bring pain, swelling, stiffness, and loss of function in joints and bones—most often in the hands and feet. Rheumatoid arthritis may also affect your internal organs and systems. You might feel sick or tired or have a fever.

Laboratory tests for certain immune system activity can confirm whether you have rheumatoid arthritis. The good news is that now there are medications not only to control pain and inflammation, but to actually slow or stop damage to your joints.

Some rheumatoid arthritis medications interfere with the immune system's activity. By interrupting the events that lead to inflammation, these medications help block inflammation and prevent structural damage to the joints.

If you feel pain and stiffness in your joints, don't hesitate to bring it up with your doctor. The sooner you act, the better you can prevent damage to your joints. Find out what's causing your problems now and learn about your options.

ARTHRITIS TIPS

Arthritis can damage not only your joints, but also internal organs and skin. Talk to your doctor about what you can do. Here are some ideas:

- Try to keep at a healthy weight that's normal for your height.
- Exercise. A health professional can show you how to move more easily. Going for a walk every day will help, too.
- If you had a severe joint injury, be careful about protecting it during future activities.
- Don't smoke. People who smoke are more likely to get rheumatoid arthritis, and their symptoms tend to be worse.
- Take your medicines when and how you are supposed to. They can help reduce pain and stiffness.
- Try taking a warm shower in the morning.

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TOYOURHEALTH
WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN



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COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH APPROACHES FOR DEPRESSION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, depression is a medical condition that affects about 1 in 10 adults in the United States. Depression can be treated with conventional medicine, including antidepressants and certain types of psychotherapy. Still, many people turn to complementary health approaches in addition to conventional treatment. Although complementary approaches are commonly used and readily available in the marketplace, many of these treatments have not been rigorously studied for depression. For this reason, it's important that you understand the benefits and risks of these complementary approaches to make informed decisions about your health.

Here are some things you should know about some complementary health approaches for depression:

Some studies suggest that omega-3 fatty acid supplements may provide a small improvement along with conventional treatment, such as antidepressants, in patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) and in depressed patients without a diagnosis of MDD. However, a lot of questions remain about how, or if, omega-3 supplements work in the body to produce such an effect.

Although some studies of St. John's wort (Hypericum perforatum) have shown benefits similar to standard antidepressants for depression in a limited number of patients, others have not. Research has shown that St. John's wort interacts with many medications in ways that can interfere with their intended effects, making its safety risks outweigh the benefit of any use of St. John's wort.

Current scientific evidence does not support the use of other dietary supplements, including SAMe or inositol, for depression.



Some studies on mind and body practices, when used along with standard treatment for depression in adults, have had modestly promising results. For example, there is limited evidence that music therapy may provide an improvement in mood. In addition, studies indicate that relaxation training is better than no treatment in reducing symptoms of depression, but is not as beneficial as psychological therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Take charge of your health—talk with your health care providers about any complementary health approaches you use. Together, you can make shared, well-informed decisions.

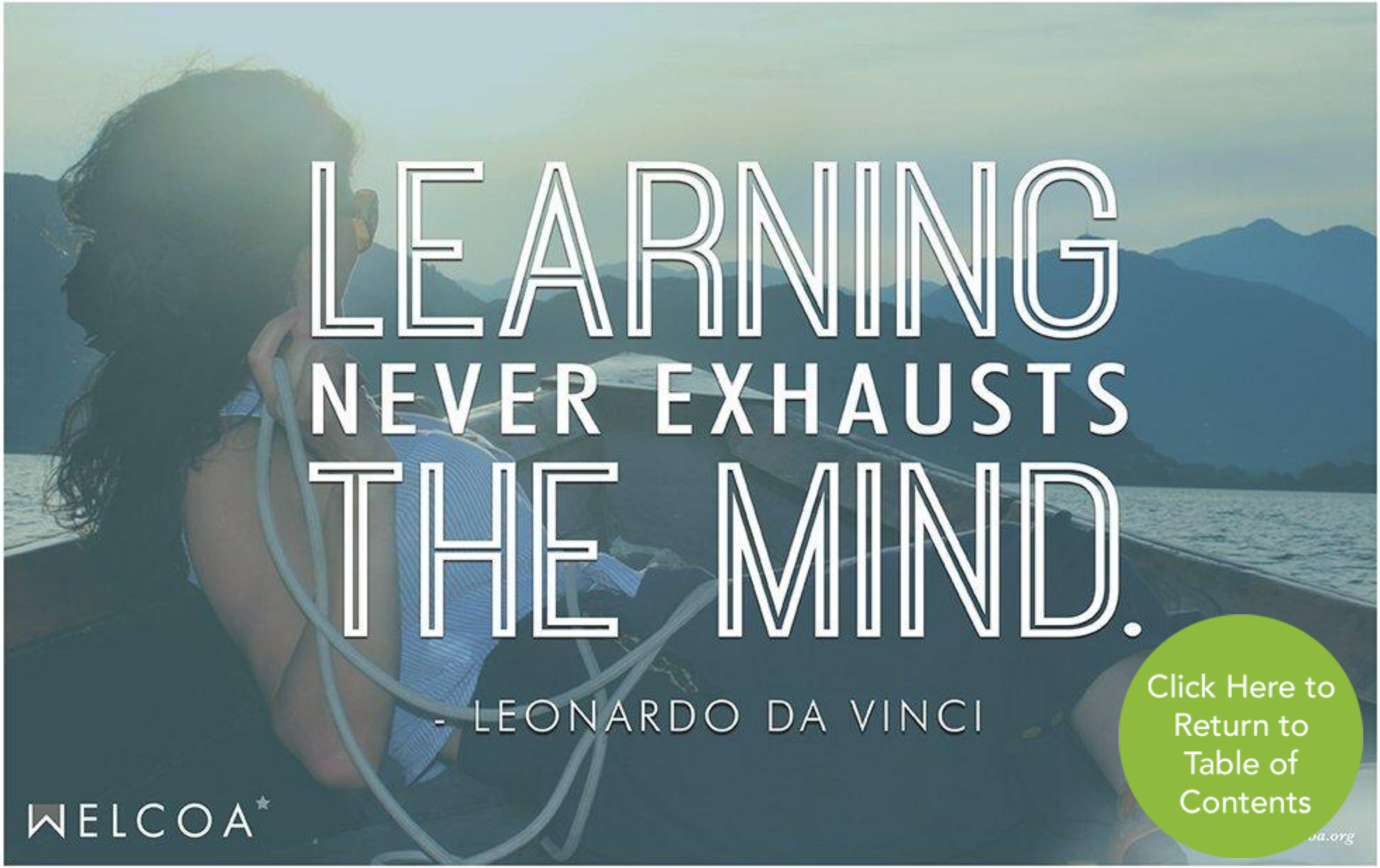
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

If you have been experiencing some of the following signs and symptoms most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks, you may be suffering from depression:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, or pessimism
- Irritability
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Moving or talking more slowly
- Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment

Not everyone who is depressed experiences every symptom. Some people experience only a few symptoms while others may experience many. The severity and frequency of symptoms and how long they last will vary depending on the individual and his or her particular illness. Symptoms may also vary depending on the stage of the illness.

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LEARNING
NEVER EXHAUSTS
THE MIND.
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