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March 2019 Health Newsletter



CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

9 Strategies for a Healthy Spring

Help prevent chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer with these 9 healthy habits for spring.



Move More, Sit Less



Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week, plus muscle-strengthening activities at least 2 days a week.

Eat a Healthy Diet

Make healthy food choices like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products.



TIP
Make half your plate fruits and vegetables and half your grains whole grains.



Rethink Your Drink



Substitute water for sugary or alcoholic drinks to reduce calories and stay safe.

Get Enough Sleep

Adults need at least 7 hours of sleep a night.



DID YOU KNOW?

Kids 6-12 need 9-12 hours of sleep a night. Teens 13-18 need 8-10 hours of sleep a night.

Quit Smoking



You can do it!
Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free support.

Be Sun Safe

Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses and use broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15.



TIP
Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays for the best protection.

Brush Your Teeth



Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

Get Your Checkups

Visit your doctor regularly for preventive services like cancer and diabetes screenings.



Learn Your Health History



Talk to your family and your doctor about your family health history.



Learn more ways to stay healthy and prevent chronic disease at www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease.



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Top 10 Tips to Save Your Vision

More than 20 million Americans suffer from severe vision loss. While not all eye diseases can be prevented, there are simple steps that everyone can take to help their eyes remain healthy now and reduce their chances of vision loss in the future.

Here are the top 10 tips from the Academy to safeguard your vision:

1. Wear sunglasses



UV blocking sunglasses delay the development of cataracts, since direct sunlight hastens their formation. Sunglasses prevent retinal damage; they also protect the delicate eyelid skin to prevent both wrinkles and skin cancer around the eye, and both cancerous and non-cancerous growths on the eye. Check for 100 percent UV protection: Make sure your sunglasses block 100 percent of UV-A rays and UV-B rays.

2. Don't smoke



Tobacco smoking is directly linked to many adverse health effects, including age related macular degeneration (AMD). Studies show that current smokers and ex-smokers are more likely to develop AMD than people who have never smoked. Smokers are also at increased risk for developing cataracts.

3. Eat right



Vitamin deficiency can impair retinal function. The belief that eating carrots improves vision has some truth, but a variety of vegetables, especially leafy green ones, should be an important part of your diet. Researchers have found people on diets with higher levels of vitamins C and E, zinc, lutein, zeaxanthin, omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA are less likely to develop early and advanced AMD.

4. Baseline eye exam



Adults with no signs or risk factors for eye disease should get a baseline eye disease screening at age 40 — the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start to occur. Based on the results of the initial screening, an ophthalmologist will prescribe the necessary intervals for follow-up exams. Anyone with symptoms or a family history of eye disease, diabetes, or high blood pressure should see an ophthalmologist to determine how frequently your eyes should be examined.

5. Eye protection



An estimated 2.5 million eye injuries occur in the U.S. each year, so it is critical to wear proper eye protection proper eye protection to prevent eye injuries during sports such as hockey and baseball and home projects such as home repairs, gardening, and cleaning. For most repair projects and activities around the home, standard ANSI-approved protective eyewear will be sufficient. Sports eye protection should meet the specific requirements of that sport; these requirements are usually established and certified by the sport's governing body and/or the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

6. Know your family history



Many eye diseases cluster in families, so you should know your family's history of eye disease because you may be at increased risk. Age-related eye diseases, including cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age related macular degeneration are expected to dramatically increase — from 28 million today to 43 million by the year 2020.

7. Early intervention



Most serious eye conditions, such as glaucoma and AMD, are more easily and successfully treated if diagnosed and treated early. Left untreated, these diseases can cause serious vision loss and blindness. Early intervention now will prevent vision loss later.

8. Know your eye care provider



When you go to get your eyes checked, there are a variety of eye care providers you might see. Ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians all play an important role in providing eye care services to consumers. However, each has a different level of training and expertise. Make sure you are seeing the right provider for your condition or treatment. Ophthalmologists are specially trained to provide the full spectrum of eye care, from prescribing glasses and contact lenses to complex and delicate eye surgery.

9. Contact lens care



Follow your ophthalmologist's instructions regarding the care and use of contact lenses. Abuse, such as sleeping in contacts that are not approved for overnight wear, using saliva or water as a wetting solution, using expired solutions, and using disposable contact lenses beyond their wear can result in corneal ulcers, severe pain and even vision loss.

10. Be aware of eye fatigue



If you have eye strain from working at a computer or doing close work, you can follow the 20-20-20 rule: Look up from your work every 20 minutes at an object 20 feet away for twenty seconds. If eye fatigue persists, it can be a sign of several different conditions, such as dry eye, presbyopia, or spectacles with lenses that are not properly centered. See an ophthalmologist to determine why you are having eye fatigue and to receive proper treatment. If you don't already have an ophthalmologist, [Find an ophthalmologist](#) in your area.

Learn More at <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/top-10-tips-to-save-your-vision-2>



How Drugs and Alcohol Affect the Immune System

Addiction is a disease that affects millions of people every year – either directly or indirectly. There is a lot of information to be found about different types of addiction, the negative legal and relational consequences associated with addiction, and the effects it has on the brain of the users. However, one area that is often neglected when addiction is talked about is the effect that it has on an individual's immune system.

Different substances affect the immune system in different ways, but most weaken it – especially when drugs or alcohol are used over a long period of time. This means that individuals who are using or abusing substances are putting themselves at a higher risk of contracting diseases, infection and weakening organs, which is the body's filtering system to fight the effects of drugs or alcohol.

HOW DOES THE IMMUNE SYSTEM WORK?

The immune system is the body's protection system. It is made up of cells, organs, and proteins which assist in preventing disease and infection. The immune system's job is to filter everything that enters the body. Aside from the central nervous system, the immune system is the most complex body system. It functions by:

- Neutralizing germs (pathogens), like viruses and bacteria, and ridding the body of them
- Identifying and neutralizing damaging substances in the body
- Fighting its own cells that have changed negatively, like cancer cells

EFFECTS OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ON THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

The immune system, when not disrupted with damaging or harmful pathogens, keeps the body functioning smoothly. However, when pathogens are introduced to the body, it can drastically weaken the immune system. When this happens, the individual can become ill with infections or disease.

The risk to the immune system is not directly related to the drugs or alcohol themselves, but rather to the toll that those substances take on the body. Many drugs, especially alcohol, cause dehydration, physical and mental fatigue, lack of sleep, and unhealthy eating or lack of food, which can cause a weakened immune system. Whenever the immune system is in a weakened state, the body is at a higher risk for the invasion of infection and disease.

ALCOHOL AND THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Drinking alcohol excessively can quickly lead to an immune deficiency, which can result in an individual being susceptible to certain diseases. Over time, alcohol abuse can result in trouble with the digestive system, damaging the cells that are responsible for secreting enzymes that the body needs for proper digestion. Long-term alcohol abuse or addiction can also lead to liver damage or failure. The liver is where the body stores vitamins, so its role is essential. Alcohol abuse may also affect a person's ability to store sufficient amounts of protein.

Overall, alcoholism can result in autoimmunity, which is when the body begins to attack its own tissues. Maybe the most dangerous effect of alcohol abuse is associated with white blood cells in the body. White blood cells are responsible for getting rid of killer white blood cells. When they are not working in that manner, the individual is at a much higher risk of developing life-threatening diseases, like **cancer**.

OTHER SUBSTANCES AND THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Heroin abuse, as with other opioid drugs, can lead to addiction. Once a person is addicted to heroin, their thoughts and actions are consumed with getting and using the drug. This typically leads to neglect with personal health, like eating and sleeping regularly, which weakens the immune system. Just like with alcohol, heroin addiction can result in the digestive system not functioning properly, which in turn, results in the body not getting the proper nutrition and the individual having a weakened system overall.

Cocaine, amphetamine, and methamphetamine users are much more likely than nonusers to contract hepatitis, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and other infections due to the effect that the drugs have on the immune system. These stimulants disrupt the proper function of a key protein system component. When this protein is not functioning, the body cannot fight off diseases and infection as it normally would.

Prescription opioids work by suppressing the immune system through a brain-to-body pathway. They begin a chain reaction which eventually leads to the suppression of three kinds of white blood cells. This suppression of blood cells weakens the user's immune system, putting them at a heightened risk of infection

and illness. That, along with the risk of addiction, makes prescribing and taking opioid painkillers dangerous.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT

Finding and taking part in drug or alcohol addiction treatment is the best way to help those struggling with addiction. If you or a loved one is addicted to drugs or alcohol, you may consider inpatient or outpatient rehabilitation to help you. If you choose inpatient treatment you will receive medical care that takes into account the toll that your substance abuse has taken on your body. You will likely receive vitamins and supplements along with a balanced diet, to help you in your physical recovery. If you attend outpatient treatment, you may have to seek help from your primary care physician to discuss your need for vitamins and supplements.

When you stop abusing substances, get the treatment you need for your addiction, and start taking better care of your physical health, your immune system will become stronger again, and often, body organs that have suffered damage are able to heal and become healthy again.

Source: www.serenitysummit.com



Thank You for viewing this month's health newsletter. If you have questions, suggestions, or would like information about joining the NCWVCAA Health Services Advisory Committee please contact Tiffany Pigott at the above contact information or via email tiffanypigott@ncwvcaa.org.

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