

Health, Mind & Body

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A Special Supplement to

The Times-Gazette

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Exploring the hidden
benefits of water

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alertness during
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The hidden benefits of water



Dehydration is a dangerous condition that can cause a host of complications and even prove fatal in severe cases. But as dangerous as dehydration can be, many cases are entirely preventable.

The best way to prevent dehydration is to drink enough water. When the body does not take in as much water as it puts out, it can become dehydrated. People who live in warm climates or in elevated altitudes may lose more water than those who do not. In addition, water loss is accelerated during strenuous exercise, highlighting the emphasis men and women must place on drinking enough water during their workouts.

But water does more for the body than prevent dehydration.

The following are a handful of lesser known ways that water benefits the body.

Water can help people maintain healthy weights.

Dieting fads come and go, but water is a mainstay for people who want to control their caloric intake in an effort to maintain healthy weights. Water has zero calories, so reaching for a bottle or glass of water instead of a soda, lemonade or another caloric beverage can help people keep the pounds off. A study from researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center found that even diet soda enhances weight gain by as much as 41 percent. In addition, soda has been linked to conditions such as obesity, diabetes and tooth decay. No such association exists with water.

Water helps to fight fatigue. The fatigue-fighting properties of water are another of its lesser known benefits. When the body is not adequately hydrated, it can experience muscle soreness. And fitness enthusiasts who do not drink enough water may notice their bodies require extensive recovery time after working out. Each of those consequences can be prevented by drinking enough water, and doing so can even improve performance, as studies have shown that just a 3 percent loss of body weight due to dehydration can cause as much as a 10 percent drop in performance level.

Water can improve the appearance of the skin.

Skin that does not get enough water can turn dry and flaky and feel tight. In addition, dry skin is more likely to wrinkle than adequately hydrated skin. Getting water to the skin can be tricky, as the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health notes that water will reach all the other organs of the body before it reaches the skin. But the school recommends applying a hydrating moisturizer within two minutes of leaving the bath or shower and drinking at least eight glasses of water a day to ensure the skin is getting enough water.

Water helps the gastrointestinal tract. Water can help maintain normal bowel function. When the body lacks sufficient fluid, the colon will pull water from stools in an effort to stay hydrated. That can lead to constipation, a condition in which people experience difficulty emptying their bowels. By drinking enough water, people can ensure their colon will not have to pull water from stools to stay hydrated, thereby helping them stay regular. Water helps the body in myriad ways, many of which might surprise people unaware of just how valuable water can be to the body.



Simple ways to avoid injuries when working out

A desire to live a healthy, active life compels many people to include exercise in their daily routines. Numerous studies have shown that regular workouts that include a combination of strength training and cardiovascular exercise can make bodies less susceptible to injury while reducing a person's risk for conditions such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Exercising is most effective when it's part of a daily routine, but that routine can be derailed if men and women are not taking the appropriate measures to avoid injury while working out. While even professional athletes succumb to injury from time to time, there are steps everyone can take to avoid injury when working out.

Confirm your technique is the right one. Exercise science is continuously evolving, and that means workouts and fitness machines are evolving as well. When using a piece of equipment for the first time or altering a workout routine, men and women should consult with a gym employee or personal trainer to learn the correct technique. Incorrect technique can lead to minor and serious injuries because muscles are used in ways they are not intended to be used when exercises are performed properly. Research appropriate techniques, taking advantage of online video tutorials if you don't exercise at a gym, to ensure the exercises you want to perform are done properly. When beginning a new routine, ask a friend or gym employee to observe your workout and let you know if you are doing anything incorrectly.

Be patient. Lifting too much weight or pushing yourself too hard on the treadmill, exercise bike or elliptical machine will increase your risk of injury. This is especially true for men and women working out for the first time or after lengthy stretches of inactivity. Men and women who are elderly, inactive and/or overweight are likely to suffer from poor balance because their muscles are weak. Those muscles can be strengthened over time, but remain patient and stick to light weight during initial workouts so lack of balance does not lead to pain or injury. Take the same approach with aerobic exercise to prevent muscle strains and pulls. Increase weight and the intensity of cardiovascular exercises as muscles gradually strengthen and become accustomed to exercise.

Allow for adequate time to warm up. Failure to warm up is another contributor to exercise-related injury. Before diving into a workout routine, spend between five and 10 minutes warming up your body with some low-intensity exercises. This increases blood flow to the muscles and makes them more elastic and pliable than cold muscles, thereby improving flexibility. Some low-intensity cardiovascular exercise on the stationary bike or treadmill can greatly reduce injury risk during the workout.

Vary workouts and exercise regularly. Varying workouts is a good idea because doing so can prevent repetitive-use injuries and prevent overuse of muscles. Repetitive-use injuries such as shin splints and tendinitis require extended rest to heal, and that



Five to 10 minutes of light aerobic exercise before working out can help men and women avoid injury.

can derail your routine and nullify your progress. Vary workouts so you are not always working the same muscles, and don't mistake varying workouts for varying workout schedules. Working out five days one week and one day the next increases your risk of injury. Injuries sometimes happen when exercising. But veteran and novice fitness enthusiasts can employ a handful of simple strategies to greatly reduce their risk of injury while working out.



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Understanding seasonal affective disorder

The tail end of Daylight Saving Time in 2016 occurred on November 6, when millions of people turned their clocks back one hour. Few people enjoy turning the clocks back in autumn as much as they enjoy turning them forward in spring. Turning the clocks forward affords many people, in particular working professionals who spend much of their weekdays working indoors, a chance to enjoy some sunlight when leaving their offices each day. However, once the clocks are turned back, professionals typically find themselves leaving their offices under a cover of darkness.

Some people easily adjust to less daylight, while others experience a condition known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. SAD is a disorder related to changes in seasons. According to the Mayo Clinic, the majority of people with SAD begin to experience symptoms in the fall and continue battling those symptoms throughout the winter. The end of Daylight Saving Time occurs in early November, and the onset of SAD symptoms is no doubt related to the decreased exposure to daylight many people experience once clocks have been turned back. Those who suspect they might be susceptible to SAD can get a better grasp of the condition so they are capable of recognizing and responding to it should any symptoms appear.

What is SAD?

Mental Health America, a leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness, defines SAD as a mood disorder associated with depression and related to seasonal variations of light. Though many people may be saddened when the clocks are turned back and the sun sets earlier than it does in the warmer

months, MHA notes that a diagnosis of SAD can only be made after the symptoms of SAD have appeared for three consecutive winters and have gone into remission once spring and summer have arrived.

What are the symptoms of SAD?

Simply feeling bummed out that winter is on the horizon does not mean a person has SAD. The following are some of the more common symptoms of the disorder:

- Depression marked by feelings of misery, guilt, hopelessness, despair, and apathy. A loss of self-esteem may also occur.
- Feelings of anxiety that include tension and an inability to tolerate stress
- Mood changes that are sometimes extreme; some SAD sufferers experience feelings of mania in spring and summer.
- Changes in sleeping habits, such as a desire to oversleep and difficulty staying awake. Some people may experience disturbed sleep and find themselves waking up in early morning when they are unaccustomed to doing so.
- Feelings of fatigue and an inability to adhere to one's normal routine

Who is most likely to suffer from SAD?

The Mayo Clinic notes that SAD is diagnosed more often in women than in men, and MHA notes that three out of four SAD sufferers are women. Young people are more likely than older people to get winter SAD, with MHA reporting that the main age of onset of SAD is between 18 and 30. Symptoms of SAD may worsen among people who have already been diagnosed with clinical depression or bipolar disorder. More information about seasonal affective disorder is available at www.mentalhealthamerica.net.



How to improve alertness during the workday

A long workday can be both mentally and physically draining. As a result, office workers and professionals whose jobs are more physically demanding than office work may find themselves less alert at the end of the workday than at the beginning.

A loss of alertness as the workday draws to a close might be unavoidable. But professionals whose sense of alertness begins to dwindle in the thick of the workday might need to take steps to improve their alertness to protect themselves from injury and to ensure the quality of their work does not suffer.

Avoid caffeine in the late afternoon. Some professionals rely on caffeinated beverages such as coffee or energy drinks to combat afternoon drowsiness. While that afternoon caffeine fix might provide an immediate, if temporary, jolt of energy, it might also affect a person's energy levels the following day. A 2013 study published in the *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* found that caffeine consumed as early as six hours before bedtime can significantly disrupt sleep. Professionals who reach for a cup of coffee in the late afternoon might get a sudden boost of energy, but their energy levels the following day might be lower due to a poor night's sleep.

Avoid high-fat foods at lunchtime. Foods that are high in fat should always be avoided thanks to their connection to a host of health problems. Such foods also negatively affect energy levels when consumed in the middle of the day. The University of Rochester Medical Center notes that the body digests and absorbs high-fat

foods very slowly. That means workers who eat high-fat foods for lunch won't get the afternoon energy boost that low-fat, healthy lunches will provide.

Snack healthy. Professionals who find themselves needing a snack in the mid- to late-afternoon can sate their hunger and give themselves an energy boost by snacking healthy. Avoid snacks like potato chips that tend to be high in fat and low in nutrition. Foods that are high in fiber and/or protein can provide a longer energy boost and quell the afternoon hunger pangs at the same time. Fresh fruit and Greek yogurt fit the bill.

Change your workout schedule. Regular exercise improves short- and long-term health while also increasing daily energy levels. Professionals who include exercise in their daily routines yet still suffer from a lack of alertness in the afternoon may need to alter their workout schedules. A 2011 study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found that participants who were assigned afternoon exercise programs during work hours reported increased productivity versus those who were not assigned afternoon workouts. If working out in the afternoon is not feasible, avoid working out too late at night, as the National Institutes of Health note that exercising within two to three hours of bedtime can disrupt sleep, ultimately having a negative impact on energy levels the following day. Professionals who find their alertness levels waning in the afternoons can combat such drowsiness in various ways.

Depression: common but treatable

It's normal to experience feelings of sadness and grief from time to time. But when these feelings are prolonged or interfere with daily life, they may be symptomatic of depression. Depression can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or economic status. The National Institute of Mental Health says around 350 million people worldwide suffer from depression. Understanding depression can help those dealing with the disorder.

What is depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that causes persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest. The Mayo Clinic says depression can produce a variety of symptoms and affect the way a person thinks, acts and feels. Symptoms may include changes in sleeping patterns, anxiety, fatigue, weight gain or weight loss, unexplained aches and pains, and difficulty concentrating.

What causes depression?

Although the cause of depression remains a mystery, certain distinguishing

factors are common among those who have the condition. People with clinical depression appear to have physical changes in their brains. In addition, naturally occurring brain chemicals known as neurotransmitters likely play a role in depression. The Mayo Clinic states changes in the function and effect of these neurotransmitters and how they interact with neurocircuits involved in maintaining mood stability may play a significant role in depression and its treatment.

In addition to biological factors in the brain, hormones can impact rates of depression or even trigger it. These hormone shifts may be a leading reason why women have higher incidence rates of depression than men. Depression is more common in people whose blood relatives also have the condition. Therefore, those with a family history of depression may be more likely to get it than those without such a connection.

Different types of depression

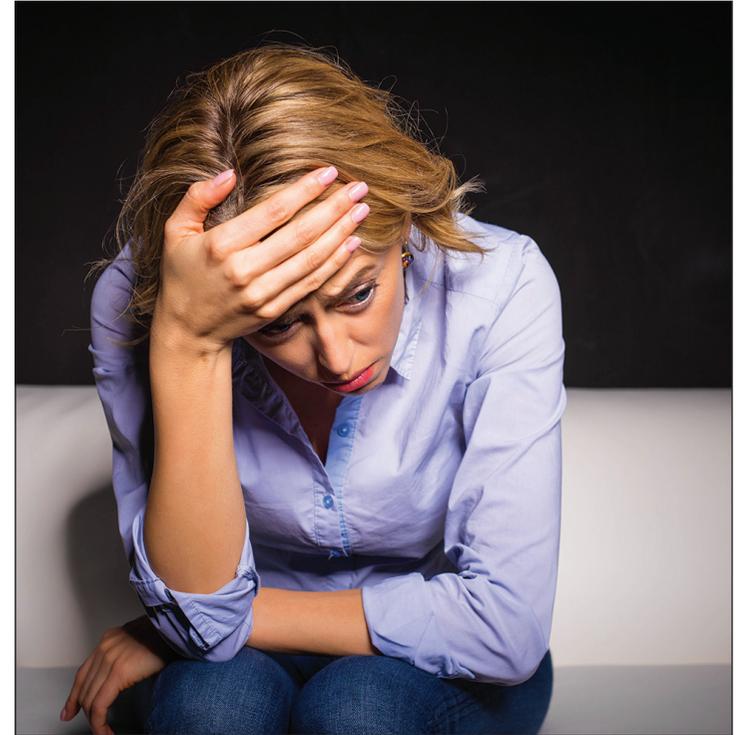
There are different types of depression. A person may have a single bout of

major depression or recurring episodes. Depression that lasts two or more years is called persistent depressive disorder. A less common type of depression is called manic-depressive illness. This involves cycles of depression that alternate with extreme highs, or manias.

Treating depression

Depression is a very treatable condition. Psychotherapy (talk therapy), medications or a combination thereof can be very effective in managing symptoms. Mental health professionals can work with individuals to find the right therapy based on symptoms and severity of the depression. Also, it may take some time to find the right medication or treatment; therefore, people are urged to remain patient and hopeful.

The National Institute of Mental Health says people who suspect they may be suffering from depression should make an appointment to see a doctor or health care provider. The sooner action is taken, the more quickly the condition can be addressed.



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Are there good and bad proteins?

Determining the nutritional value of certain foods can be a tricky business. Many foods can be enjoyed in moderation, and labeling them as “good” or “bad” might lead to negative connotations. In addition, food labels change from time to time as nutritionists and doctors learn more about nutrition and revise their opinions on certain items.

One food type that has remained off the bad foods radar for quite some time is protein. Protein sources are largely touted as the be-all and end-all in nutrition. But even seemingly infallible protein should be eaten in moderation, and even then only if the right sources of protein are selected.

Protein is an essential building block of good nutrition that is found throughout the body and makes up the enzymes that power many chemical reactions. Protein helps fuel the hemoglobin in the blood that carries oxygen throughout the body.

The Institute of Medicine recommends that adults get a minimum of 0.8

grams of protein for every kilogram of body weight per day (or 8 grams of protein for every 20 pounds of body weight). Physicians in the United States recommend a daily protein allowance of 46 grams for women over the age of 19 and 56 grams for men. Too often, however, people are overloading on protein because they think it’s a better option than carbohydrates and other food sources. But not all protein is the same.

Protein that comes from animal sources offer all of the amino acids a body needs. Unfortunately, some animal sources are less healthy than others. That’s because animal-based protein sources also contain saturated fat. Consuming too much saturated fat may contribute to elevated levels of LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol in the blood. LDL may lead to the formation of plaque in arteries that limits blood flow and may be a risk factor for heart disease. Fatty red meats and whole-milk products tend to contain

more saturated fat than other protein sources.

The key when consuming protein is to find the right balance in protein sources. Fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and seeds may offer many of the required essential amino acids. The rest can be obtained by choosing smarter animal-based protein sources. Salmon and other fatty fish are good sources of protein and omega-3 fatty acids (heart-healthy fats) and are generally low in sodium. Lentils offer 18 grams of protein and ample fiber. Plus, these legumes have virtually no saturated fat.

When looking for healthy protein sources, consumers can opt for the following selections.

Salmon: Wild salmon may have greater nutritional value than farmed salmon thanks to the more diversified diet consumed by wild salmon.

Chicken: Chicken is generally lower in saturated fat than other animal protein sources. Opt for pasture-raised chicken



for the greatest nutritional punch.

Greek yogurt: Greek yogurt provides ample protein and can contribute to feelings of fullness, making it a more worthy snack than less healthy snacking alternatives.

Shellfish: Shellfish includes clams,

oysters, mussels, and snails. Shellfish are sources of animal protein that also happen to be full of iron, zinc, omega-3 fatty acids, and other nutrients. Variety is the spice of life when it comes to protein sources. Eat different foods to ensure the body gets all of the nutrients it requires.

Did you know?



Carbohydrates are seen as the enemy by many people looking to lose weight, but that reputation is ill-deserved for certain types of carbs. Carbohydrates referred to as “smart carbs” can boost energy and mood and help people, even dieters, maintain healthy weights. Smart carbs, which can be found in fruits, vegetables, minimally processed whole grain products such as brown rice and quinoa, and whole wheat bread among other foods, contain vital nutrients and fiber. The body takes longer to absorb whole grains than it does processed carbohydrates, stabilizing blood sugar and energy levels as a result. Because the body takes longer to absorb whole grains, feelings of satiety and fullness are extended. That reduces the likelihood of being hungry again shortly after eating, thereby helping people maintain healthy weights. Those who want to avoid carbohydrates should avoid products made with white flour, such as white bread, non-whole grain pastas, potato chips, and breakfast cereals with high amounts of sugar.

Did you know?



Preparing meals at home remains the least expensive way to eat. The budgeting resource Cheapism.com compared the costs of a classic chicken dinner — accounting for variables such as tip, food waste and family size — made at home and at a restaurant. The comparison determined that a home-cooked meal costs as much as 60 percent less than a dinner out. A simple chicken dinner for one costs between \$6 and \$8 at home, takeout costs more than \$13 and dining out costs more than \$15. The rates of savings are similar when accounting for paying for a family of four.



4 foods that can boost energy levels

Diet can go a long way toward increasing or lowering energy levels. No one wants to consume foods that will make it harder for them to get through the day, so the following are a handful of foods that pack an energetic punch.

1. Cashews: Cashews, which are high in magnesium, help to convert sugar into energy. Magnesium deficiency can lead to low energy levels, so nuts that are high in magnesium, including cashews, can provide that mid-afternoon jolt that some people are seeking. Cashews are high in calories, so it's best for those looking to lose weight or maintain healthy weights to adhere to serving suggestion guidelines.

2. Skinless chicken: A study from researcher Judith Wurtman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Clinical Research Center found that alertness tends to increase when the brain produces the neurotransmitter dopamine and the hormone norepinephrine. Skinless chicken contains an amino acid known as tyrosine that helps in the production of both dopamine and norepinephrine. If skinless chicken is not available, other foods that may provide this same effect include fish, lean beef and eggs. In addition, lean meats like skinless chicken contain enough vitamin B to help ease insomnia.

3. Salmon: Omega-3 fatty acids can help the body fight inflammation, which has been linked to a host of ailments, including chronic fatigue. Salmon is also high in protein, which can eliminate the mid- to late-afternoon hunger pangs that can derail healthy diets and contribute to weight gain.

4. Beans: Beans are loaded with fiber, and that's a good thing for energy levels. Like magnesium, which can also be found in beans, fiber takes awhile to digest, extending the energy-boosting properties of foods loaded with fiber. In spite of the growing movement to eat and live healthier, many adults still do not include enough fiber in their diets. Men and women can consult with their physicians to determine how to make that happen, but eating more beans is a good start.



Recognize and avoid youth sports injuries

Children benefit in various ways from their involvement in youth sports. Being part of a team fosters feelings of belonging, inspires collaborative play and strategy and can be an excellent form of exercise. Still, despite the benefits, parents often worry about the injury risk their children face on the playing fields. Those fears are justified. A Safe Kids Worldwide survey of emergency room visits found that a young athlete visits a hospital emergency room for a sports-related injury more than a million times a year, or about every 25 seconds. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says more than 2.6 million children 0 to 19 years old are treated in the emergency department each year for sports- and recreation-related injuries. Some of the more common injuries young children face have to do with the skeletal and muscular systems of the body. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons stresses that children's bones, muscles, tendons, and

ligaments are still growing, making them more susceptible to injury. Fortunately, with some education, many youth-sport injuries can be prevented.

Sprains and strains

Sprains are injuries to ligaments, or the bands of tough, fibrous tissue that connect two or more bones at a joint. Strains impact a muscle or a tendon, which connects muscles to bones. Clinical research has linked acute strains and sprains to improper warm-up before sports, fatigue and previous injuries. Preparticipation conditioning and stretching can help reduce the risk of injury.

Periostitis

Periostitis is commonly known as "shin splints." This is an overuse injury that occurs in athletes who are engaged in activities that involve rapid deceleration. Periostitis causes inflammation of

the band of tissue that surrounds bones known as the periosteum, and typically affects people who repetitively jump, run or lift heavy weights. To head off potential pain in the shins, young athletes can gradually build up their tolerance for physical activity. Supportive shoes or orthotic inserts may also help. Incorporating cross-training into a regimen also can work.

Repetitive use activities

Swimmers, tennis players, pitchers, and quarterbacks may experience something called a repetitive use injury. This is pain in an area of the body that is used over and over again. Inflammation of muscles and tendons may appear, but repetitive use injuries also may result in stress fractures, which the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases defines as hairline fractures in bones that are subjected to repeated stress. Rest between exercises can help alleviate

these types of injuries. Ice, compression, elevation and immobilization may be used if pain is persistent.

Growth plate injuries

Kids Health says growth plates are the areas of growing tissue near the ends of the long bones in the legs and arms in children and adolescents. A growth plate produces new bone tissue. If the growth plate is injured, it cannot do its job properly. That may contribute to deformed bones, shorter limbs or arthritis. Growth plate injuries most often result from falling or twisting. While there's no surefire way to prevent growth plate injuries, getting proper and immediate care after an injury can help prevent future problems. An orthopedic surgeon has the expertise to diagnose and treat these injuries. Youth sports injuries are common but preventable. Warming up, being in good physical shape and not overtaxing a growing body can help kids avoid pain and impairment.

Recognize potentially dangerous household chemicals

Homes are safe havens that people retreat to in an effort to relax and unwind. However, homes may be harboring some hazards that put their inhabitants at risk.

Cleaning products and chemicals can be found in every home, but some may be putting people in jeopardy. Even seemingly safe items can prove dangerous when they are used and/or stored incorrectly. Individuals who make a concerted effort to educate themselves about common household chemicals can reduce the likelihood that such cleaners will hurt them in the long run. The following are some commonly used products that may prove dangerous or irritating with prolonged use.

Air fresheners

These seemingly innocuous products may be doing more harm than good. Information published in a 2015 issue of *The Journal of Toxicological Sciences* linked air fresheners to volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. They also may contain ultra-fine particles of formaldehyde and phenol. In addition, National Geographic's *The Green Guide* states that many air fresheners contain nerve-deadening chemicals that coat nasal passages and temporarily block one's sense of smell. Many widely available air fresheners use phthalates, which are linked to hormonal and reproductive issues, birth defects and developmental disorders. In lieu of chemical air fresheners, spray diluted essential oils around the house.

All-purpose cleaners

Many cleaners list bleach and ammonia among their ingredients. Bleach may be listed as sodium hypochlorite. When used as directed in a well-ventilated space, bleach and ammonia can be relatively safe. However, fumes from bleach or ammonia can cause rashes and skin irritation and irritate the eyes and respiratory tract. Bleach and ammonia should never be mixed because mixing the two can produce a deadly chloramine gas. Vinegar and baking soda can be used as a replacement for many household cleaning products, and these alternatives have virtually no dangerous side effects.

Drain and oven cleaners

Many drain and oven cleaners contain lye (sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide), a chemical derived from salt or wood ash that is used to break down other substances, particularly those that are sticky. Lye is quite caustic in high amounts and extremely alkaline, which can cause burns and skin irritation. Lye is also found in soaps and detergents. When handled correctly in safe amounts, lye can be used safely. However, it can be dangerous if it gets into the hands of children or is touched by pets.

Antibacterial products

Antibacterial soaps, lotions and wipes may contain triclosan, triclocarban and at least 17 additional ingredients that are linked to various negative health

effects. In September 2016, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned the use of these antibacterial agents. These chemicals can disrupt hormone cycles and cause muscle weakness.

"There's no data demonstrating that over-the-counter antibacterial soaps are better at preventing illness than washing with plain soap and water," the FDA said in a press release issued shortly after the rule was announced.

In addition to the aforementioned products, some carpet cleaners, toilet cleaners and other detergents may prove harmful. Always read ingredient lists, use products in the proper fashion and keep any and all chemicals away from children and pets.



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Assistive devices help people remain mobile

Disabilities affect people from all walks of life. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that around 55 million Americans have a disability of some kind. Of these people, 33 million have a disability that makes it difficult for them to carry out some daily activities. Statistics Canada states that, as of 2012, 13.7 percent of the population age 15 years or older reported having a disability that could impact daily life.

People with disabilities may need assistive devices to reclaim some measure of their independence. For example, millions of people rely on wheelchairs or walking aids to get around. These are called assistive technology and rehabilitative devices, which include tools, equipment or products that can help people with disabilities get around more easily. These devices may be as small as magnifying glasses for reading to as large as wheelchairs.

The National Institutes of Health state that 2.2 million people in the U.S depend on wheelchairs for day-to-day tasks and mobility. More than six million use canes, walkers or crutches to assist with mobility. The following are some of the common types of mobility devices available for purchase.

Canes: Canes are handheld devices that provide a little extra stability or support to weakened

limbs. Canes are easily transported and can assist those who need only a little help.

Standard walkers: Also known as medical walkers, standard walkers offer substantial support and must be lifted to move. That requires upper body strength, which can be difficult for some to maintain on long trips.

Rolling walkers: Rolling walkers are similar to standard walkers. But rolling walkers have wheels, either on the front only or on both sets of legs. They are somewhat less stable than standard walkers. Rolling walkers with wheel-locking devices may offer stability when needed. Some rolling walkers are called "rollators."

Wheelchairs: Standard wheelchairs must be powered by the person in the chair or by someone pushing it from behind. This can be difficult for people with minimal upper body strength. Mechanical wheelchairs are powered with a lever or button. Some people may opt for motorized scooters over bulkier wheelchairs when possible.

Assistive devices can be highly effective, but only when they are used properly and safely. Assistive devices should be measured for each user. Many walkers are height-adjustable. The width of a device also is important. A walker or another device that is too wide can affect mobility or require modifications to be made around



Rolling walkers are assistive devices that can keep individuals mobile despite cognitive or physical disabilities.

the home. Weight is another consideration. The device should be lightweight so it can be maneuvered, but also weigh enough to provide enough stability to keep users upright. Users should proceed slowly and favor their stronger sides when relying on canes or walkers.

Devices should not be used to climb atop other items like step stools. Children should not be allowed to play with or ride on assistive devices. If there are safety belts or locks on any assistive technology, they should be put in place before use to prevent further injury.

Silicosis a rare but potentially harmful disease

In recent decades, much has been done to improve workplace safety. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration instituted one such effort by requiring protective equipment to be used in the workplace. That resolution aimed to limit silica dust inhalation, which can increase workers' risk for a potentially harmful disease known as silicosis.

A lung disease caused by breathing in tiny bits of silica, silicosis mostly affects workers in the mining and glass manufacturing industries. People who work in foundries may also be vulnerable to silicosis. Understanding silicosis and its potential side effects can help workers protect themselves against this disease that the American Lung Association notes accounts for more than 100 deaths per year in the United States alone.

What is silica?

Silica is a naturally-occurring crystal that is found in most rock beds. During activities such as mining, quarrying, glass manufacturing, and tunneling, silica dust can form. Exposure to that dust can cause scarring of the lungs that can affect a person's ability to breathe.

What causes silicosis and who is most vulnerable?

Exposure to crystalline silica and silica dust causes silicosis. The ALA notes that such exposure may result from chipping, cutting, drilling or grinding soil, sand, granite or other minerals. As a result, workers who work in certain industries are most vulnerable to silicosis. These industries include but are not limited to:

- mining (coal and hard rock)
- construction
- glass manufacturing
- steel
- ceramics
- masonry

Are there different types of silicosis?

There are three types of silicosis, and which type a person has can affect his or her prognosis.

Chronic silicosis: The U.S. National Library of Medicine cites this as the most common form of silicosis. Chronic silicosis results from exposure to low amounts of silica dust for more than 20 years. Trouble breathing may occur in people with chronic silicosis, as silica dust can cause swelling in the lungs and chest lymph nodes. The ALA notes that chronic silicosis appears 10 to 30

years after exposure.

Accelerated silicosis: Accelerated silicosis occurs after exposure to large amounts of silica in a five- to 15-year time period. Swelling in the lungs and associated symptoms of silicosis will occur faster in people with accelerated silicosis than those with chronic silicosis.

Acute silicosis: Short-term exposure to very large amounts of silica can result in acute silicosis. Symptoms of acute silicosis, which can include fever, sharp chest pain and difficulty breathing, may appear suddenly. The lungs of people with acute silicosis may also fill with fluid, resulting in severe shortness of breath and low blood oxygen levels.

Can silicosis be prevented?

Workers who work in industries where exposure to silica and silica dust is a possibility should take every preventive measure possible to limit their exposure. Always wear protective gear and clothing, which the law requires employers in certain industries provide to their employees. Smokers who work in occupations vulnerable to silicosis should quit smoking, as smoking further damages and weakens the lungs. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends medical examinations before



Workers in the construction industry may be vulnerable to a harmful lung disease called silicosis.

accepting employment in industries where silica exposure is possible, and examinations at least every three years thereafter. More information about silicosis is available at www.lung.org.

Why dental hygiene is essential for overall health

The importance of maintaining clean teeth and healthy gums goes beyond having fresh breath and a white smile. Many people are surprised to discover that oral hygiene plays an integral role in overall health. Research indicates that oral health mirrors the condition of the body as a whole. Also, regular dental visits can alert dentists about overall health and pinpoint if a person is at a risk for chronic disease. An oral health check-up also may be the first indication of a potential health issue not yet evident to a general medical doctor.

Heart disease

According to the Academy of General Dentistry, there is a distinct relationship between periodontal disease and conditions such as heart disease and stroke. Joint teams at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom and the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, Ireland, found that people with bleeding gums from poor dental hygiene could have an increased risk of heart disease. Bacteria from the mouth is able to enter the bloodstream when bleeding gums are

present. That bacteria can stick to platelets and subsequently form blood clots. This interrupts the flow of blood to the heart and may trigger a heart attack. Brushing and flossing twice daily and rinsing with mouthwash can remove bacteria and keep gums healthy.

Facial pain

The Office of the Surgeon General says infections of the gums that support the teeth can lead to facial and oral pain. Gingivitis, which is an early stage of gum disease, as well as advanced gum disease, affects more than 75 percent of the American population. Dental decay can lead to its own share of pain. Maintaining a healthy mouth can fend off decay and infections, thereby preventing pain.

Pancreatic cancer

In 2007, the Harvard School of Public Health reported a link between gum disease and pancreatic cancer. In the ongoing study, 51,000 men were followed and data was collected beginning in 1986. The Harvard researchers

found that men with a history of gum disease had a 64 percent increased risk of pancreatic cancer compared with men who had never had gum disease. The greatest risk for pancreatic cancer among this group was in men with recent tooth loss. However, the study was unable to find links between other types of oral health problems, such as tooth decay, and pancreatic cancer.

Alzheimer's disease

Various health ailments, including poor oral health, have been linked to a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. In 2010, after reviewing 20 years' worth of data, researchers from New York University concluded that there is a link between gum inflammation and Alzheimer's disease. Follow-up studies from researchers at the University of Central Lancashire in the United Kingdom compared brain samples from 10 living patients with Alzheimer's to samples from 10 people who did not have the disease. Data indicated that a bacterium — Porphyromonas gingivalis — was



The health of teeth and gums can impact other parts of the body.

present in the Alzheimer's brain samples but not in the samples from the brains of people who did not have Alzheimer's. P. gingivalis is usually associated with chronic gum disease. As a result of the study, experts think that the bacteria can move via nerves in the roots of teeth that connect directly with the brain or through bleeding gums. These health conditions are just a sampling of the relationship between oral health and overall health. Additional connections also have been made and continue to be studied.

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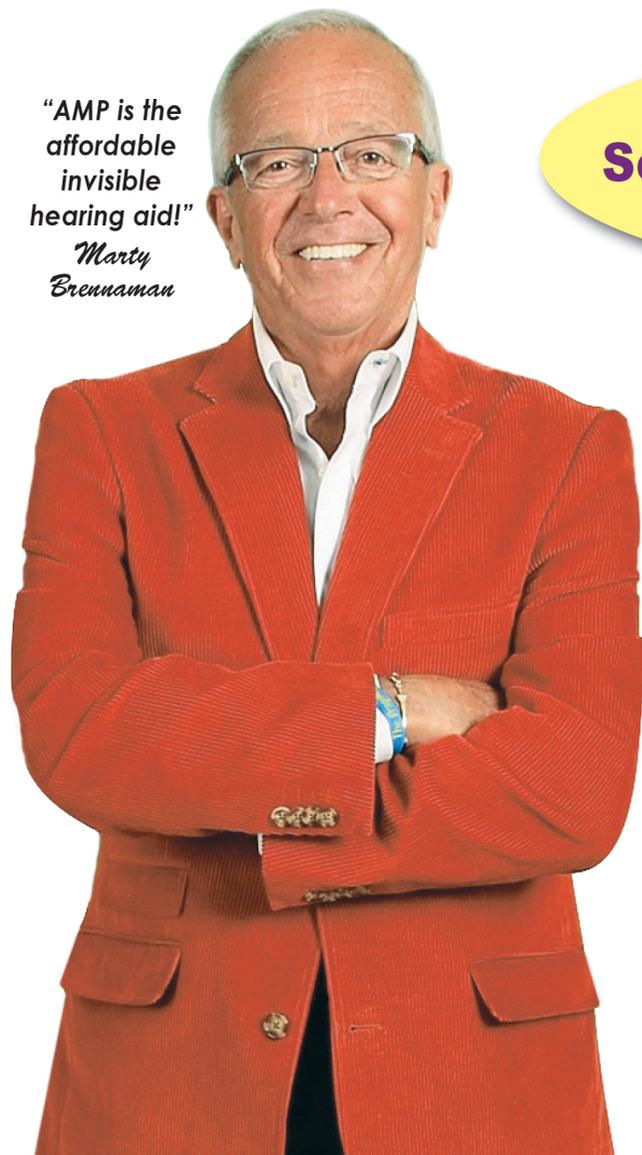
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