

HEALTH & WELLNESS

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Patients with Alzheimer's speak out about how to handle a diagnosis

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month

Many Americans struggle with what to say and do when a family member, friend, co-worker or neighbor is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, and though it's a life-changing disease, there are many ways loved ones can offer support in a good way.

The Alzheimer's Association recently asked those living with early-stage Alzheimer's and other dementia what they want others to know about living with disease. The answers reveals some pathways to gracious support.

An estimated 6.5 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia, including 180,000 North Carolina residents, a number estimated to grow to as many as 210,000 by 2025.

Nationally, more than 11 million caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. In North Carolina, 356,000 caregivers provide a total of 514 million hours of unpaid care, valued at a total of \$7.3 billion.

The shock of someone revealing a dementia diagnosis can leave many at a loss for how to engage. Efforts to be supportive can be dampened by concerns of saying or doing the wrong thing. Worse, not knowing what to say or do, some individuals distance themselves from diagnosed individuals, further deepening the sadness, stigma and isolation people living with Alzheimer's and dementia can experience in the wake of a diagnosis.

Here are six things people with early-stage Alzheimer's shared:

- **My Alzheimer's diagnosis does not define me.** Although an Alzheimer's diagnosis is life changing, many living with the disease say their diagnosis does not change who they are. Many diagnosed

individuals say they want to continue doing the activities they enjoy for as long as possible and stay engaged with family and friends.

- **If you want to know how I am doing, just ask me.** The sudden change in how others communicate with someone recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's or another dementia is a frustrating experience for many living with the disease. Many individuals say it can be upsetting when family and friends only check on the person through a spouse or an adult child. They say avoiding or side-stepping direct communication only makes them feel more isolated and alone.

- **Yes, younger people can have dementia.** While the vast majority of Americans affected by Alzheimer's and other dementia are age 65 and older, the disease can affect younger individuals. Those diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's (before age 65) say it is important for others to avoid the common misconception that Alzheimer's and other dementia only affects older people and to take cognitive concerns seriously at any age.

- **Please don't debate my diagnosis or tell me I don't look like I have Alzheimer's.** While family members and friends may be well-intended in attempting to dismiss an Alzheimer's diagnosis, many living with the disease say such responses can be offensive. If someone says they have been diagnosed with dementia, take them at their word.

- **Understand sometimes my words and actions are not me.** It's my disease. As Alzheimer's disease and other dementia progresses, individuals can experience a wide range of disease-related behav-



iors, including anxiety, aggression and confusion. Diagnosed individuals say it's important for others to recognize disease-related symptoms, so they are better prepared to support the person and navigate communication and behavioral challenges.

An Alzheimer's diagnosis does not mean my life is over. Earlier detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and other dementia is enabling diagnosed individuals more time to plan their futures and prioritize doing the things most important to them. Many people living with early-stage Alzheimer's and dementia say they want to continue living active, fulfilling lives for as long as possible.

Educating yourself and others about the disease is one of the best ways to reduce stigma and misperceptions.

"The stigma surrounding Alzheimer's and other dementia is due in large part to a lack of understanding of the disease," said Katherine L. Lambert, CEO of the Alzheimer's Association — Western Carolina Chapter. During Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month in June, the Alzheimer's Association encourages everyone to learn more about disease-related challenges facing those living with Alzheimer's and other dementia.

The Alzheimer's Association offers guidance for navigating every stage of the disease. The Association's Live Well series provides tips to help early-stage individuals live their best lives. For other disease-related information and resourc-

es, visit alz.org.

During Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, join the Alzheimer's Association in North Carolina for these activities to support the 180,000 North Carolinians living with Alzheimer's and their 356,000 caregivers.

"Healthy Brain, Healthy Body, Healthy You Symposium" — will take place on June 13-16 from 12:15-1:15 p.m.

Learn about research in the areas of diet and nutrition, cognitive activity and social engagement. Discover strategies and activities to incorporate into your plan for healthy aging in our four-part series. Sponsored by Sharon Towers this series includes sessions on healthy habits, therapeutic horticulture, food prep, and mindfulness. Participants may join all sessions or just those of interest.

"Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body: Tips from the Latest Research" — taking place in Lake Toxaway, N.C. on June 9 from 10:15-11:15 a.m. and in Candler, N.C. on June 15 from 11 a.m. — Noon.

Learn about research in the areas of diet and nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement, and use hands-on tools to help you incorporate these recommendations into a plan for healthy aging.

"Warning Signs of Alzheimer's" — will take place on June 30 from 6-7 p.m.

Alzheimer's Disease and other de-

Alzheimer's continues on 16

A new view on pain in physical therapy

By Jared Sonnier
Smoky Mountain Sports Medicine

One the most common phrases said in physical/occupational therapy clinics daily is “no pain, no gain,” but there’s a better way to say this.

Physicians use this phrase in an attempt to motivate and help individuals tolerate discomfort during a treatment session. Although the phrase is taken from the bodybuilding world, in rehab, it is largely flawed when you look at emerging pain science research. Here I’ll briefly discuss a few surprising findings from top pain researchers.

Pain is as complex as it is mysterious. It can be caused by trauma, emotional distress or no injury at all. Pain is primarily thought to be the result of tissue damage but the truth is it’s actually poorly correlated to tissue damage.

Everything from stress levels to our beliefs and the perception of a threat play a role in an individual’s pain experience. Example: A man rolls his ankle while crossing a busy street, moments later he sees a bus heading toward him. Without thinking, he quickly crosses the street to safety. In that moment, his brain decided the bus was a greater threat than his rolled ankle and was able to avoid experiencing pain to reach safety.

Pain is an output from our brains, not an input from our bodies. That said, it’s important to note that all pain is real and individualized. Example: Two wit-



Jared Sonnier

nesses of the same car accident see things differently because of their unique perspectives. This helps us understand that treatment should be individualized for each person and not just focused on the painful tissues. The best approach is multi-disciplinary.

Finally, exercise and education can positively affect an individual’s pain experience. Physical/occupational therapists are movement experts who can provide exercise prescriptions and education regarding pain. The more active someone is and the more one understands how pain works, the less likely they are to experience it. “Know pain, now gain”.



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THE SUN IS FUN, BUT AVOID THE RISKS

By American Cancer Foundation

Sunburn is an inflammatory reaction to ultraviolet (UV) radiation damage to the skin's outermost layers. Sunburns can range from mild to blistering. Even a light pink sunburn poses dangers.

The sun can cause cellular damage that can lead to cancer, something that may not show up until years later.

Here are a few things to know about the danger of too much sun.

- Even without a burn, sun exposure raises skin cancer risk. That means you can even get a sunburn on an overcast day. Always wear sunscreen.
- Every sunburn is a sign of injury to your skin that can result in premature aging and skin cancer. Repeated sunburns raise your risk. For fair-

skinned people, especially those with genetic predisposition, sunburn plays a clear role in developing melanoma.

- Even one blistering sunburn in childhood or adolescence more than doubles your chances of developing melanoma later in life. Skin damage builds up over time starting with your very first sunburn. The more you burn, the greater your risk of skin cancer. Five or more sunburns more than doubles your risk of developing potentially deadly melanoma

Sun safety

Prevent sunburn by seeking the shade, applying broad-spectrum sunscreen and wearing protective clothing.

- Treat sunburn by cooling the skin, covering up and getting out of the sun immediately. Continue to

cool the burn with cold compresses, but don't apply ice directly to the sunburn. Or take a cool shower or bath, but not for too long, which can be drying. Avoid harsh soap, which might irritate the skin even more.

- While skin is still damp, use a gentle moisturizing lotion (but not petroleum or oil-based ointments, which may trap the heat and make the burn worse). Repeat to keep burned or peeling skin moist over the next few days.

- Decrease the inflammation by taking a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen, naproxen or aspirin at the first sign of sunburn. You can continue with the NSAIDs as directed on the label until the burn feels better.

- Try an over-the-counter 1%



cortisone cream as directed for a few days to help calm redness and swelling. Aloe vera may also soothe mild burns and is generally considered safe.

- Burns draw fluid to the skin's surface and away from the rest of the body, so you may become dehydrated. Rehydrate by drinking extra liquids, including water and sports drinks that help to replenish electrolytes.

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Are blue light-blocking glasses worth it?

By Celia Vimont

Eyeglasses that claim to filter out blue light from computers, smartphones and tablets are becoming increasingly popular. Ads for these glasses claim overexposure to blue light can cause a number of problems, including digital eye strain, sleep cycle disruption, or even blinding eye diseases.

There is no scientific evidence that the light coming from computer screens is damaging to the eyes. Because of this, the Academy does not recommend any special eye wear for computer use.

Is Blue Light From Screens Hurting My Eyes?

Long hours staring at digital screens leads to decreased blinking. Blinking less sometimes causes a series of temporary eye symptoms known

as eye strain. But these effects are caused by how people use their screens, not by anything coming from the screens. The best way to avoid eye strain is to take breaks from the screen frequently.

The amount of light coming from a computer has never been demonstrated to cause any eye disease. A study reprinted by the National Library of Medicine found no measurable UVA or UVB radiation (the most harmful part of light) from computer screens.

There is some evidence that blue light affects the body's circadian rhythm, our natural wake and sleep cycle. The best way to avoid sleep disruption is to avoid using screens two to three hours before bed. Using "dark" or "night" mode on devices in the evening can help, too.

Do Blue Light-Blocking Glasses Help With Eye Strain?

A recent study suggested that blue

light-blocking glasses do not improve symptoms of digital eye strain. The American Academy of Ophthalmology does not recommend blue light-blocking glasses because of the lack of scientific evidence that blue light is damaging to the eyes.

What Can I Do To Ease Eye Strain?

You can protect your eyes from strain if you work with computers all day with these tips:

Sit about 25 inches (arm's length) from the computer screen. Position the screen so you are gazing slightly downward.

Take regular breaks using the "20-

20-20" rule: every 20 minutes, shift your eyes to look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

When your eyes feel dry, use artificial tears to refresh them.

Adjust your room lighting and try increasing the contrast on your screen to reduce eye strain. Use a matte screen filter if needed.

If you wear contact lenses, give your eyes a break by wearing your glasses.

Most eye symptoms caused by computer use are only temporary and will lessen after you stop using the computer. If you continue to experience these symptoms, contact your ophthalmologist.

The recommendation for children using screens all day is the same as for adults: the best way to find relief from eye strain is to take breaks.

This article can be found on the American Academy of Ophthalmology website under the eye health section.



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AHA News: The healing power of music for stroke survivors

By American Heart Association News

Julie Stillman was 55 years old when a blood vessel in her brain suddenly burst. The hemorrhagic stroke left her unable to compose a simple sentence — a hard blow for a woman who built a career in book publishing.

It also robbed her of the ability to speak properly. But not the ability to sing.

Now 69, Stillman is one of several dozen stroke and brain injury survivors who lift their voices in joy as part of the Aphasia Choir of Vermont. There are a handful of such choirs springing up around the world, giving stroke survivors and people living with dementia or other brain injuries a chance to tap into one of the few means of communication left to them.

“To hear that clarity and volume,



it's like magic,” said Stillman’s husband, Jeff Nagle, whose last fluid conversation with his wife took place 14 years ago on the phone, an hour before he found her on the floor of their home. “It’s amazing to see this happen.”

Roughly one-third of people who survive strokes have aphasia, a speech disorder that makes it difficult to express or understand language resulting from damage done to the brain. But scien-

tists have long known that even when people with certain types of aphasia lose the ability to speak, they often are able to sing, a phenomenon attributed to the different regions of the brain responsible for producing music and language.

Studies of this phenomenon and of how music affects the brain have led to the development of a variety of music-supported therapies, such as melodic intonation therapy, which trains stroke survivors to communicate rhythmically to build stronger connections between brain regions. Other therapies focus on listening to music or teaching people to play musical instruments, such as the keyboard or drums.

A growing body of research shows these types of therapies can play an important role in helping stroke survivors heal.

As early as 2008, researchers published work in the journal *Brain* that showed just listening to music for an hour each day improved memory and attention, as well as mood, during the early stages of stroke recovery. A follow-up to that study in 2014 provided insights as to how and why: Listening to music stimulated structural changes in the areas of the brain responsible for verbal memory, language skills and focused attention.

Digging deeper, investigators were able to show vocal music was superior to instrumental music or listening

to audiobooks in stimulating the brain changes that led to memory and language recovery.

Stillman and Nagle were among the first to join when Leary launched the choir in 2014, with just 11 stroke survivors and their spouses and caregivers.

Since then, the group has more than doubled in size. She recruits through stroke support groups and the University of Vermont, which has a speech and language pathology program and an outpatient clinic.

“The choir has been a wonderful support group in a different way than what we had in speech therapy,” said Nagle. “We’ve made a lot of friends.”

And through those friendships, they’ve expanded Stillman’s ability to resume some of her old hobbies, such as a love of boating. Another choir member introduced them to an adaptive kayaking group in which stroke survivors and others with physical disabilities use special equipment that allows them to paddle with one arm. They are now active participants in both groups, enjoying a social life they never thought they’d see again.

More research is needed to see if music therapy can be more effective than traditional speech therapies, he said. But in the meantime, stroke survivors can listen to their favorite music or join a choir, if one is available in their area.

American Heart Association News covers heart and brain health. Not all views expressed in this story reflect the official position of the American Heart Association. Copyright is owned or held by the American Heart Association, Inc., and all rights are reserved. If you have questions or comments about this story, please email editor@heart.org.

By Laura Williamson, American Heart Association News

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Alzheimer's research casts doubt on safety of popular brain supplements

By Dennis Thompson

(HealthDay News) — A dietary supplement believed to protect against Alzheimer's disease might instead be potentially harmful to the brain, a new study warns.

L-serine is an amino acid that serves many different roles in the body, and one is to influence the development and function of synapses in the brain.

Clinical trials are underway to test serine supplements in older adults experiencing cognitive decline, researchers said, based on the thought that a lack of serine might fuel development of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

But new findings suggest the opposite is true — elevated serine levels might instead contribute to Alzheimer's disease, researchers reported May 3 in the journal *Cell Metabolism*.

"We are trying to say, be cautious,"

said lead researcher Xu Chen, an Alzheimer's disease researcher and assistant professor of neuroscience at

the University of California, San Diego. "If you're trying to prevent Alzheimer's disease or cognitive decline during aging, serine might not help you and, in fact, might be doing something bad."

This scientific controversy revolves around an enzyme called PHGDH, which is a key ingredient for production of serine in the brain.

A *Cell Metabolism* study published in 2020 had argued that PHGDH levels are lower in the brains of Alzheimer's patients, and suggested that L-serine



tablets could be a "ready-to-use" therapy for Alzheimer's, the new report's authors said in background notes.

"You can buy it on Amazon," Chen said of L-serine. "The rationale behind it is simple. They're saying it supports your brain function, because it's one of the components of your neuronal receptors."

However, research by Chen and her colleagues revealed that there's actually a steep increase in PHGDH among Alzheimer's patients, as well as in healthy people approximately two years before they were diagnosed with the disease.

Chen's team analyzed genetic samples taken post-mortem from the brains

of people in four different research groups, each made up of 40 to 50 people ages 50 and older. The subjects consisted of Alzheimer's patients, people without cognitive problems whose brains showed early signs of Alzheimer's-related changes, and folks with healthy brains.

The researchers found a consistent increase in PHGDH among both Alzheimer's patients and people with early signs of Alzheimer's, compared to the healthy control group.

What's more, PHGDH levels rose higher as a person's Alzheimer's became more advanced, both in physical degeneration within the brain as well as in worsening test scores of a person's memory and thinking ability, the researchers said.

Research continues on 16

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Need for O negative blood donations is critical

The combination of already low supply, the approaching summer season, and sustained low donor turnout could result in an O negative blood shortage soon, which could disrupt patient care.

Last week, TBC was activated through the Blood Emergency Readiness Corps (BERC), to send O negative blood to South Texas after the devastating school shooting. The need for O negative blood has since been highlighted by that tragedy but has unfortunately not resulted in an increase in O negative donations.

Adding to the issue, the summer months are usually the hardest season to collect enough, exacerbated by an increase in travel and traumas. It is estimated that summer travel will increase by 16% and 75% of Americans are ex-

pected to take a summer vacation, indicating this travel season is set to be the busiest since the pandemic – a sign that people are returning to normal. As that happens, the fear is that patients like Kristen Odom will continue to be overlooked.

“During my labor, unbeknownst to anyone...I was bleeding internally but no one knew it and it was not discovered until immediately after our daughter was born,” says Odom. “I will never forget one anesthesiologist yelling over the team, referring to blood, ‘I don’t care where you get it, but I need it, and I need



it now.’ After I came out of ICU, my husband and I realized how much blood I needed, and the fact that donated blood was the key factor that turned everything around.”

O negative blood is the most transfused blood type for traumas and emergencies, so the demand never wavers. O negative blood donors are often referred to as the “universal donor” since everyone, no matter their blood type, can receive O negative blood. TBC aims to have a 5-7 day supply of O negative blood but has recently had a one day supply. In some instances, one trauma case alone

can use up that supply.

TBC has also announced a program that uses blood donations to help victims of the Uvalde shooting. TBC blood donors now have the option to convert their reward points into a monetary donation to the Robb School Memorial Fund (One Star Foundation) through the TBC online store. These funds will be used locally to support the families and community affected in Uvalde, Texas.

To find a donor center or mobile unit location to donate, go to the bloodconnection.org/donate, call 864-751-1154, or walk into any donor center or mobile unit. TBC has donor center locations in South Carolina, North Carolina, and one in Savannah, GA. Resources, such as photos and general video for the media, can be found here.

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Try these three fun, fresh sneaker trends



(StatePoint) New shoes can be a great way to update a wardrobe while staying motivated to remain on track with a wellness goal.

From platform sneakers to slip-on styles with clean, classic graphics, a range of fresh footwear trends are all the rage. To stay on-trend, try these three tips and style ideas on for size.

1. Slide on slip-on styles: According to Alyson Stanley, buyer for national retailer Rack

Room Shoes, fashion is a form of expression, and right now, comfort and convenience are doing all the talking. The latest slip-on shoes require no lacing up or adjusting Velcro straps, making getting dressed easy and fun for even the youngest family member.

Shoes to try: Vans' retro styles come in various vibrant colors and patterns, with sizes for school-aged girls and boys, and parents, too. Additionally, the Nike Flex Runner Slip-On Sneaker is available in fun color combinations and offers plenty of support for children to run, jump and play.

2. Reach new heights with chunky soles: When it comes to platform sneakers, there's no need for subtlety. Bigger is better. Top brands embrace this elevated shoe design in both high-top and low-top versions.

Shoes to try: This season, Converse offers platform styles that kick it up a notch in a plethora of colors, including white-on-white, pastel shades, animal prints and classic patterns.

3. Color block: Athletic shoes adorned with pops of bright colors, such as coral, teal, bubblegum pink and neon green, are a fresh choice to stay motivated to maintain fitness goals all year – and an ideal way to add a unique look to an outfit.

Shoes to try: Nike's Air Max Excee sneaker offers a variety of vibrant options for men, women and children.

For one-stop-shopping during any season, visit Rack Room Shoes in stores or online at rackroomshoes.com.

"With a few simple updates, embracing this year's shoe trends can be simple, easy and fun for the whole family," says Stanley.



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Better hearing improves overall health

By Dr. Brent Steele

You may not be aware that your hearing health also affects your overall health.

Hearing loss can happen suddenly, or it can slowly deteriorate over time. No matter which one is affecting you it is important to seek out medical counsel.

A local hearing provider can help you in many ways and by treating your hearing loss the following issues can be reduced or completely disappear with the use of a hearing device.

Tinnitus symptoms

Tinnitus is characterized by a ringing, buzzing or whooshing sound in the ear. These sounds are not caused by an external source, making them difficult to cope



with. Many people do not believe tinnitus can be treated, but there are several options available to al-

leviate these symptoms.

Hearing aids boost the stimulation between the brain and the auditory pathways meaning the ringing sounds can be hidden by the device. The volume features on hearing aids also give the wearer a great deal of control over their tinnitus symptoms. Some hearing aids today even have a built-in tinnitus masker.

Mental health

Untreated hearing loss can have negative ramifications on your mental wellbeing. Anxiety and depression are commonly experienced in individuals with untreated hearing loss.

This is thought to occur because many people become frustrated and overwhelmed by not being able to decipher conversation, so they begin to socially isolate themselves.

You might have given up on going out with family and friends simply because you can't hear them and feel lost in the conversations they are having.

Balance

Your balance is something that can be associated with hearing loss. Those with a mild hearing loss (25db) are three times more likely to have a history of falls. With every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss the risk increases 1.4 times the original risk.

By getting your hearing balanced you are reducing your risk of falling. Some hearing aids even contain a fall detection alert to send to your loved ones.

Ear wax

Excessive ear wax can also cause diminished hearing. Many clinics offer ear wax removal services.

If you are experiencing any of these situations the first step is to schedule an appointment with a local hearing provider. They will perform a hearing evaluation to determine if you have a hearing loss and how advanced your condition is. If a loss is detected the specialist will likely recommend hearing aids.



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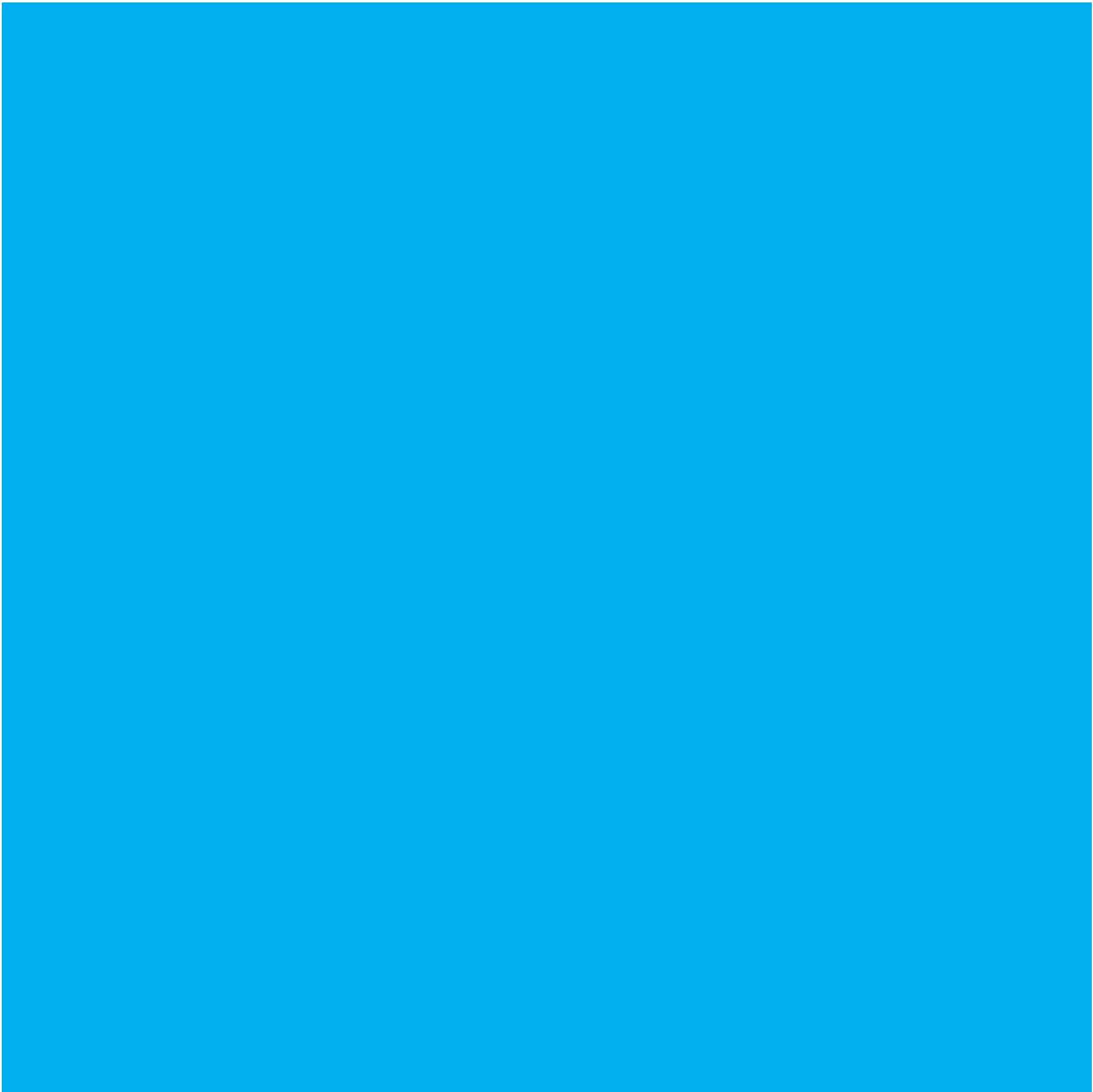
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Pardee named among best hospitals

In 2022, Pardee UNC Health Care was named one of America's 100 Best Hospitals, with special recognition given to Specialty Clinical Awards in four service lines, including Critical Care, Pulmonary Care, Stroke Care, and Gastrointestinal Care.

Pardee is the only hospital in North Carolina to be recognized as one of America's 100 Best Hospitals for both Critical Care and Pulmonary Care in 2022. To reach the top 100, hospitals must have reached the top 250 for at least five consecutive years.

Each year, Healthgrades, a resource that connects consumers, physicians, and health systems, releases its list of America's 100 Best Hospitals. These hospitals are in the



top two percent of hospitals in the nation for exhibiting clinical excellence year over year and have consistently delivered better than expected clinical outcomes for their patients.

Healthgrades evaluates hospital performance using objective quality measures including clinical outcomes and patient safety, as well as patient experience. In coming up with its rankings, Healthgrades examined about 4,500 hospitals and analyzed their performance in more

than 30 common procedures and conditions, such as heart procedures and strokes. This data was reviewed over a three-year window from 2018 through 2020.

The rankings offer consumers more tools to make the best choices to receive the best care. They can feel confident in hospitals like Pardee for their commitment to high-quality care and exceptional outcomes. These recognitions help provide patients and consumers with peace of

mind when choosing where to get care.

Pardee UNC Health Care is a not-for-profit community hospital founded in 1953 and is managed by UNC Health Care. The hospital is licensed for 222 acute care beds. Pardee has several locations separate from the main campus, including a comprehensive physician practice network, a cancer center, four urgent care locations and six orthopedic clinics.

In the
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for clinical excellence
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What you need to know about hospice

By Hospice Foundation of America

Here are several ways to describe hospice.

- Hospice is medical care to help someone with a terminal illness live as well as possible for as long as possible, increasing quality of life.
- An interdisciplinary team of professionals who address physical, psychosocial, and spiritual distress focused on both the dying person and their entire family.
- Care that addresses symptom management, coordination of care, communication and decision making, clarification of goals of care, and quality of life.

When is it time for hospice?
Deciding when it's time for hospice is difficult and should be discussed with loved ones and a physi-

cian. It is generally time for hospice when:

- The patient has 6 months or less to live, according to a physician;
- The patient is rapidly declining despite medical treatment (weight loss, mental status decline, inability perform activities of daily living);
- The patient is ready to live more comfortably and forego treatments aimed at prolonging life.

Not just for cancer (or adults) anymore

It is not surprising that people often associate hospice with cancer. In the mid-1970s when hospice came to the U.S., most hospice patients had cancer.

Today, more than half of hospice patients have other illnesses for



which they are medically eligible for hospice services, such as late-stage heart, lung or kidney disease, and advanced Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Hospice also once was exclusively for adults but today many hospice programs accept infants, children and adolescents.

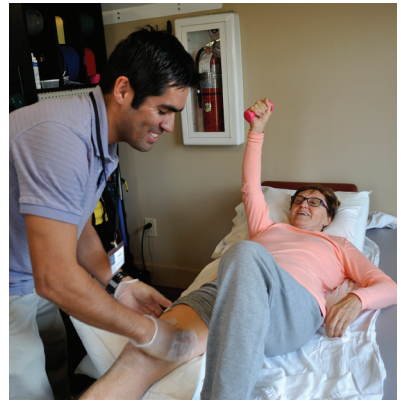
Medical eligibility

To receive hospice services, a

hospice physician and a second physician (often the individual's attending physician or specialist) must certify that the patient meets specific medical eligibility criteria.

These generally require the patient's life expectancy to be 6 months or less if the illness, disease or condition runs its typical course. However, if the individual lives longer than six months and their condition continues to decline, they may be recertified by a physician or nurse practitioner for additional time in hospice care.

Similarly, if a hospice patient's condition improves, they may be discharged from hospice care. The patient is eligible for hospice again if his or her condition begins to decline.



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HEALTH & WELLNESS

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Alzheimer's continued from 2

mentias cause memory, thinking and behavior problems that interfere with daily living. Alzheimer's experts will share how to recognize common signs of the disease; how to approach someone about memory concerns; the importance of early detection; benefits of diagnosis; possible tests and assessments for the diagnostic process and Alzheimer's Association resources.

"Mental Health & The Aging Brain: Prevention, Diagnosis & Treatment" — will take place June 9 from 6-7:30 p.m. as part of the "Under the Dementia Umbrella" series.

This program will provide an understanding of mental health issues that can occur prior to and after diagnosis of a neurocognitive disorder. Learn how to identify and understand key differences in dementia and neurocognitive symptoms, and what interventions and treatments are available.

"The Impact of HIV on Brain Health" — will take place on June 16 from 11 a.m. – Noon as part of the

Research continued from 7

They believe that while PHGDH serves as an important enzyme in early brain development, as you grow older the enzyme might actually overstimulate synapses and burn them out if there's too much in the brain.

"We think this is a metabolic stress issue happening in the brain," Chen said. "Either environmental stress or a predisposition of the brain to neurodegeneration might induce an increase in this enzyme, to ramp up neuronal firing capacity by making more serine."

"But in the end, the neuron goes crazy, causing hyperactive excitability or excitotoxicity," Chen continued. "It creates a lot of stress in the brain that leads to neuronal death."

In fact, the researchers are con-

"Thrive with Pride" monthly series.

While many issues are the same for all older adults and those who care for them, some unique considerations arise for LGBTQ+ people dealing with aging. Each month various topics are discussed related to brain health, caregiving and the unique issues that impact LGBTQ+ individuals. During this June program learn about the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia, stages and risk factors, current research and the impact of HIV to long-term cognitive health.

Additional information on educational programs and other care and support resources or how to get involved with the Association, can be found by visiting the Alzheimer's Association — Western Carolina Chapter at act.alz.org/ncmonthlyprograms or by calling our 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900).

For more information about Alzheimer's disease or the Alzheimer's Association Western Carolina Chapter, visit alz.org/northcarolina or call (800) 272-3900.

cerned that a vicious cycle or snowballing effect occurs, where the brain keeps producing more and more PHGDH to counter the loss of brain activity that happens when too much PHGDH kills off neurons.

"If we can find a way to restore balance prior to the snowball happening, we might have a chance to slow down the disease," Chen said.

That means PHGDH could be a potential target for future Alzheimer's drugs, Chen said. Griffin said people interested in taking L-serine for brain health should discuss the matter with their doctor.

"It's always good to have that conversation to ensure that it's OK to take any supplement," Griffin said.

The Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation has more about L-serine.

Why you may need health insurance

Health insurance provides financial protection in case of a serious accident or illness. Here's why finding a suitable policy can pay off in the long run.

1. To be prepared for the unexpected

No one plans to get sick or hurt, but just like car insurance, health insurance protects you and your wallet

from the unexpected. Your situation could change quickly with an injury, accident, or major illness.

2. Keeping healthy now may help you avoid expensive health issues later

People with health insurance are more likely to visit the doctor regularly for services like annual checkups, flu shots, and routine bloodwork.

Routine preventive care may uncover health problems people don't even know they have, potentially heading off an expensive, major illness — and major expense — down the road.

There are plenty of options for health insurance coverage. They are worth checking out.



Is your sleep apnea under control?

(StatePoint) High-quality sleep is fundamental to your health and happiness. However, for the 10-30% of U.S. adults living with sleep apnea, a good night's rest is not guaranteed.

Obstructive sleep apnea is a respiratory condition where airways narrow during sleep, causing short periods when you're not breathing. Incredibly common, it's estimated that there are millions of Americans with undiagnosed and untreated sleep apnea.

Uncontrolled sleep apnea is associated with a number of challenging symptoms, including Excessive Daytime Sleepiness (EDS). This symptom, which can linger even after one begins being treated for sleep apnea, is often described as feeling excessively drowsy.

If you experience EDS, you might even fall asleep when you shouldn't. For example, sleepiness at work or while you're watching kids, along with drowsy driving, could put you and others at an increased risk of accidents and injury.

Not everyone being treated for sleep apnea experiences complete symptom relief. This is why the American Lung Association, with support from Jazz Pharmaceuticals, is encouraging the public to recognize their

own or a loved one's sleep challenges.

"The first step to better sleep is to share your unresolved symptoms with your healthcare provider. If you are diagnosed with sleep apnea after participating in a sleep study, your doctor will work with you to manage the condition," says Dr. Atul Malhotra, a board-certified pulmonologist, intensivist and research chief of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine at UC San Diego.

Dr. Malhotra recommends setting up a follow-up appointment within three months after you begin treatment — or sooner if problems arise, and then on an annual basis after that.

"Unfortunately, some patients continue to experience lingering symptoms," says Dr. Malhotra. "It's important to address these concerns with your doctor."

You'll know if your treatment is working based on how you're feeling. Are you less sleepy during the day? Do you have higher energy levels? Does your bed partner notice less snoring, gasping or sleep disruptions?

To help your doctor understand what you're experiencing at your appointment, it's important to distinguish fatigue, which is a lack of energy, from sleepiness, which is an

inability to stay awake.

Everyone deserves the benefits of high-quality sleep. If you have difficulty getting a good night's rest, be sure to talk to your doctor about your symptoms right away.

For more information about sleep apnea and EDS visit lung.org.



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RESET TIPS FROM A WOMAN WHO LOST 60 POUNDS

(StatePoint) Being indoors makes it easy to pack on unwanted pounds and fall into less than healthy patterns. The warm weather months however are the perfect time to reset and take control of your health.

Even though she wanted to make a change, Melissa Caveness needed to figure out the right path to achieve her goals.

“I needed help, and I was motivated, but it wasn’t until Nutrisystem that I was successful,” says Caveness, who on the program, lost 60 pounds and can now keep up with her active family. “I can now do all the fun activities and can even outrun my kids...sometimes!”

Using these three simple tips, you can be on your way to a happier, healthier you this season and beyond:

Change your routine
If you’ve fallen into bad habits, it’s time to shake things up. There’s no better time than right now to change your routine.

Whether it’s making time to eat breakfast or adding in a 15-minute walk at lunchtime, little changes can make a big difference. Committing to these changes for a month or season can increase the likelihood of them turning into long-term, natural habits.

Prioritize sleep
When you don’t get enough sleep, you are more likely to choose unhealthy foods and to overeat in general. Sleeping for the recommended seven to eight hours a night improves your overall health and

supports your weight loss goals.
To get better sleep, cut out screen time one hour before heading to bed. The light from your phone or tablet suppresses your body’s production of melatonin, a hormone that controls your body’s sleep cycles. Taking time away for just one hour prior to hitting the hay can make a big difference in your sleep quality.

Portion control
Many of us tend to overeat or rely on large portions of comfort foods. To get just what you need with no wasted food, consider a program like Nutrisystem that brings you meals and snacks that are nourishing and filling in just the right portions.

Plus, if you’re still craving some of those comfort foods on colder days, Nutrisystem has plenty of op-

tions like broccoli cheddar soup and Merlot Beef with Root Vegetables. You can also keep within your grocery budget by shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables that are in-season — choices abound this time of year.

After sharing her story, Caveness was named one of last year’s winners in the Nutrisystem Real \$40K Giveaway. If you have a Nutrisystem weight loss success story, you can share your journey for a chance to win \$40,000 by visiting nutrisystem-contest.com. And for more great tips and other inspiring stories, visit leaf.nutrisystem.com.

To reset this season, take a cue from those who’ve met success by committing to smart strategies and healthy choices.



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Melissa Caveness, before and after



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Your take-out coffee cup may shed trillions of plastic ‘nanoparticles’

By Dennis Thompson

(HealthDay News) — Maybe you ask the barista for cream with your coffee, and possibly sugar as well.

But new research shows that paper cup of joe you grab off the coffeehouse counter contains another ingredient, and it's one you might not care for — trillions of tiny plastic particles that leach into your hot java from the cup's plastic lining.

Single-use paper coffee cups are lined with a thin plastic film that helps keep liquids hot and prevent them from leaking through the cardboard.

That lining releases more than 5 trillion plastic nanoparticles per liter when hot liquid is poured into a 12-ounce single-use cup, according to lab results published recently

in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology*. A liter is about 34 fluid ounces.

“For reference of size of these particles, 1,000 particles with a diameter of 100 nanometers can fit across a human hair,” said lead researcher Christopher Zangmeister, a chemist and acting group leader with the Material Measurement Laboratory of the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Gaithersburg, Maryland. “These are very small particles.”



The researchers estimated that by the time you've downed 13 paper cups of hot coffee or tea, you've consumed the equivalent of one nanoplastic particle for every seven cells in your own body.

Low levels

The researchers were quick to note that the total amount of particles that leached into hot liquid from single-use cups fell well under safe human consumption levels set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Environmental experts agree — to a point.

According to David Andrews, a senior scientist with the Environmental Working Group, “There is a visible global environmental crisis caused by plastic pollution, but this new research study indicates that invisible plastic nanoparticles released into our food and beverages from common plastics may be insidiously harming health.”

Andrews added that “the Food and Drug Administration should move expeditiously to require more testing and disclosure of the chemicals and nanoparticles being released from plastic food contact materials, and take necessary action to ensure that these materials are not harming health.”

These nanoparticles are small enough to slip into your bloodstream and can wind up lodged in tissues and organs located throughout your body, noted Rolf Halden,

director of the Center for Environmental Health Engineering at Arizona State University.

“We really don't know what the impact of these particles is,” Halden said. “Human exposure is increasing, and we lack the tools to even measure what is arriving in our bodies, where it is deposited and what it does there.”

Halden noted asbestos causes harm because its tiny particles are inhaled and accumulate in lung tissue, causing inflammation that can lead to scarring and cancer.

“Asbestos itself is relatively benign. It's an inorganic material,” Halden said. “What makes it toxic and makes it kill 90,000 people a year is that it has particles that lodge in human tissue.”

Hot water poured into 12-fluid-ounce cups for 20 minutes and allowed to cool wound up leaching 5.1 trillion plastic nanoparticles per liter.

People concerned about these levels might consider bringing a metal or ceramic travel mug with them to the coffee shop, researchers said.

Paper cup manufacturers also could make a simple change to their industrial process that could ward off human exposure to these particles, Reddy added.

“Could the industry perform a hot-water treatment on these cups before they send them out to the consumer, and pre-wash these particles away?” Reddy said. “I look at this and I go, is there an easy fix to this problem? If we exposed all our cups to one last rinse, we'd get rid of a lot of these particles.”

The Plastic Health Coalition has more information about microplastics and human health.

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FIVE TIPS TO STAY SAFE ON THE RIVER THIS SUMMER

(RiverLink) Summer is right around the corner which means it's time to break out those canoes, kayaks, and tubes for some river adventures! While we love spending time on the water, we know that there are some potential risks involved in a river trip. To make sure that you and your float crew have the best possible experience, here are 5 tips for a fun and safe outing on the river:

1. Check river conditions before you go: The state of the river can vary drastically depending on recent weather events — and keep rising even after the rain has stopped. After just one day of heavy rain the river can rise 3-6 feet and move almost 300% faster! Check out our River Facts page to find updated conditions in your area. If the discharge for the river is over 3,000 cubic ft per second, we advise staying off the river.



2. Know your estimated float time: Nobody likes it when an anticipated 3-hour trip becomes a 6-hour endeavor. Most trips will take 20-30 minutes per mile while paddling and 30-45 minutes per mile while tubing. These times will vary based on current conditions, personal ability, and other factors so it's a good idea to give yourself some extra time.

3. Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) and good-fitting water shoes:

You never know when you might get separated from your watercraft and a PFD could save your life — that's why some people call them life jackets. And you never know what could be at the bottom of the river, so a good pair of shoes will help protect your feet from rusty metal and sharp glass. Flip flops are not water shoes!

4. Keep your head above water: Naturally, any bacteria and water-borne illnesses can enter your body through

your nose and mouth. Keeping your head dry will help you avoid health concerns later.

5. No glass and no trash left behind: As we mentioned, there can be broken glass and other hazardous materials in the river. To keep this issue from getting worse, bring your drinks in aluminum cans or plastic bottles, and make sure to carry everything off the river that you brought on.

River trips can be a ton of fun and by following these simple tips you can help ensure that you and everyone else on the water enjoys a safe, memorable experience.

RiverLink promotes the environmental and economic vitality of the French Broad River and its watershed. For more information see riverlink.org or call 828-252-8474.

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Choosing healthy snacks for kids

By [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

While meals make up the majority of a child's nutritional intake, most children eat at least one snack per day.

While many of the most commonly offered kids' snacks tend to be of lower nutritional value than meals, snacks still can support — or even enhance — your child's overall healthy eating plan. Here's how:

Use snack times as a way to increase fruits and vegetable intake. Most kids do not eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables.

Snack times offer a great opportunity to increase access and exposure to these nutrient-dense foods. Consider pairing them up with dairy products or dairy substitutes (such as grapes and cheese) lean proteins (such as celery and peanut butter), or whole-grain cereals and bread (such as banana sandwich on whole grain bread).

Keep a range of healthy foods handy at home. It is much easier to make easy, healthy snacks when you keep a few key items stocked at home. Ideas include different types of raw vegetables and fruit, yogurt dip, hummus, and cheese sticks.

Avoid processed foods and added sugars. Processed foods (made in a factory and sold in bags and boxes) do not have many nutrients and often have a lot of added sugar



and salt. In addition, children may become hungry faster after eating processed foods.

Teach your children to eat a rainbow of colors. Arrange your children's foods to show the beauty of fresh, brightly colored foods. Talk about the farms where food comes from and the farmers who help grow it.

Snack Ideas for Families: Foods to Keep on Hand

Type	Suggestions
Fresh Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Apples, bananas, peaches, nectarines, pearsCherries, grapes, plums (sliced or pitted)Orange or grapefruit sectionsStrawberries, grapes (cut into half for small children)
Dried Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Apples, apricots, peaches, pears (cut up)Dates, prunesRaisins, cranberries
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Carrot sticks, celery sticksRaw or steamed cauliflower, broccoliBell pepper strips—red, yellow, orange, and greenGrape and cherry tomatoesFresh or frozen corn and peasSliced cucumbersAvocado slices or chunks
Lean Proteins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fish (canned tuna, salmon, sardines, whitefish)Peanut butter or other nut butters (smooth, spread on whole grain bread or crackers)Edamame beans or chickpeas or hummus spreadsCooked tofu cubes or tofu dipHard boiled eggs
Dairy Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cheese (sliced, grated, or diced)Cottage cheeseLow-sugar yogurtMilk—cow's milk or non-dairy milks
Breads & Cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whole wheat breadWhole grain tortillas or tortilla chipsWhole grain crackersWhole grain dry cerealsRice cakesWhole grain pitas and bagelsAir-popped popcorn

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