



HEALTH

Mind & Body



JANUARY 2025

A Special Section From

The Malone Telegram



Outdoor Play is Important Even When it's Cold

By **SARA ALLEN TAYLOR**

Infant-Toddler Project Director, Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country.

Colder weather is upon us, but that doesn't mean outdoor play for young children should be shelved until spring.

The Heart Network's Creating Healthy Schools & Communities (CHSC) program, which is funded by a grant from the New York State Department of Health, works throughout Franklin County to increase access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity. This work includes an

early childhood component through a partnership with the Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country (CCCCNC), the goal of which is to engage with childcare providers to adopt policies, practices and environment changes that promote nutrition and physical activity for young children.

In past years, CCCNC and The Heart Network have highlighted the ways parents and caregivers can take advantage of indoor activities to keep young children moving in

the cold seasons. However, it's equally important to note the health benefits of outdoor activity, especially in winter. Outdoor play can help children boost immunity, increase exposure to vitamin D and it helps get them engaged in a wider variety of physical activities.

It's worth noting, too, that cold temperatures aren't necessarily the cause of winter-time viruses, a belief that sometimes leads to parents keeping kids inside. According to the Centers for Disease Control, winter colds are

caused by viruses, not icy weather, so getting your kids outside may actually help them avoid getting sick. That's not to say that cold temperatures don't come with risks. Dressing kids appropriately is important — layers, hats, mittens, boots and snow pants are all necessary, especially when the temperature falls below 32 degrees.

When it comes to outdoor play itself, the Child Care Council, The Heart Network and our partners encourage families to keep it simple. If you can

ski or snowshoe, that's great, but those activities can be expensive for families with limited means. Take your kids out and build a snowman, go sledging or walk around local parks that keep trails clear.

Don't let winter deter your family from getting outside and being active. For tips and resources, we encourage folks to visit cccnc.org to learn more. To learn more about The Heart Network's CHSC program, email Arriana Patraw at apatraw@heart-network.org.



METRO

Exercise is an essential part of improving one's life expectancy.

Improve life expectancy with healthy habits

Metro

'Who Wants to Live Forever' is a song that appeared on the 1986 album 'A Kind of Magic' by the rock band Queen. The song often sparks conversation about the potential benefits of immortality. Immortality may not be possible, but many people aspire to improve their chances to live a long and prosperous life. A study published in the journal *Lancet* analyzed data from the 2016 Global Burden of Diseases project to generate life expectancy predictions from 2017 to 2040 for most countries. The United States saw the largest decline in ranking among high-income countries, as life expectancies in the United States are projected to fall from 43rd in 2016 to 64th by 2040, with an average life expectancy of 79.8. Life expectancy in the U.S. has dropped in each of the past two years, according to annual reports by the National Center for Health Statistics. But there may be hope for Americans yet. Doctors and scientists continually study the lifestyles

of people who outlive their life expectancies. While genetics can play a role, so can following healthy habits, which have been identified to promote longevity.

■ **Don't smoke.** Many smokers have been told that smoking trims 10 years off their life expectancies, and that statement is corroborated by a study published in 2013 in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that tracked participants over a span of several years. The good news is people who quit before the age of 35 can usually regain those lost years.

■ **Avoid drug use.** Accidental drug overdoses contributed to 63,600 deaths in the United States in 2016, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Usage of prescription opioids and heroin has skyrocketed in recent years. Drug use also may exacerbate mental illnesses, potentially making drug users more vulnerable to suicide.

■ **Maintain healthy body mass.** Moderate to vigorous exercise regimens and diets loaded with

healthy foods can keep weight in check. Maintaining a healthy weight has a host of positive side effects, including reduced risk of dying from cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is a leading killer in North America. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, nearly four in 10 adults and 18.5 percent of children in the United States are obese. According to the 2015 Canadian Health Measures Survey, 30 percent of adults in Canada are obese and may require medical support to manage their disease.

■ **Limit alcohol consumption.** Some evidence suggests that light drinking can be good for cardiovascular health. However, a paper published in the *Lancet* suggests every glass of wine or pint of beer over the daily recommended limit will cut half an hour from the expected lifespan of a 40-year-old. The paper says the risks are comparable to smoking. Simple, healthy lifestyle changes can help people increase their life expectancies.



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What *cold weather* does to the body and how to protect yourself

By **LAURA WILLIAMSON**

American Heart Association News

As temperatures drop, zip up that coat, pull on a hat and gloves and be mindful of how much time you're exposed to the elements, especially if you're an older adult or have an underlying cardiovascular condition.

Health experts warn extreme cold — or even prolonged exposure to normal winter temperatures — can affect the heart, the brain and other vital organs.

"Each and every system of the body can be affected," said Dr. Haitham Khraishah, a preventive cardiologist at University Hospitals Harrington Heart & Vascular Institute and an assistant professor of medicine at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

land.

HOW THE BODY LOSES HEAT

When exposed to the cold, the body can lose heat faster than it's produced. Over time, the body uses up its stored energy and body temperature begins to drop. Long-term exposure to the cold — especially if the body's core temperature falls below 95 degrees — can lead to hypothermia, frostbite and other problems.

There are multiple ways the body can lose heat, Khraishah said.

About 60% of heat loss occurs through radiation — heat simply radiates away from the body into the surrounding air. The body also can lose heat through conduction and convection, which happens when a per-

See **PROTECT 15**

Make sure to dress for the weather and take indoor breaks from the cold this winter. Pexels

Quebec Winter Carnival: Ice is a cool way to fete season

By **HUNTER BOYCE**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

From canoe races to sculpted palaces, the Quebec Winter Carnival will use ice in interesting ways to celebrate its coldest season. For the winter traveler itching to add something unique to their February 2025 schedule, it might just be a perfect getaway.

WHAT IS THE QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL?

When the canoe races and sculptor

exhibitions begin, one of the world's largest winter carnivals will be turning 71. Every February for nearly three quarters of a century, the Quebec Winter Carnival has been celebrating the cold through concerts, snow baths and ice-based craftsmanship.

The festival began in 1955 as a way to promote economic development to a region still recovering from two world wars and the Great Depression. Now it's grown into a major North American travel hot spot.

WHEN AND WHERE IS THE CARNIVAL?

The carnival will last 10 days, starting Feb. 7 and ending Feb. 16. The festival will be held in Quebec City, capital of the French-speaking Canadian province from which it gets its name.

Entry to the carnival is free, but travelers hoping to participate in the featured events will need effigies. Effigies are the official carnival passes giving patrons access to everything offered. Now through Feb. 16, effigies will cost

\$39.

Children 12 and under, however, do not need effigies and can participate in events for free. Travelers can learn more at wdt.me/quebecfest.

WHAT IS THERE TO DO AT THE CARNIVAL?

The carnival's 2025 event program is still in the works, so new things to do will likely be announced as time marches closer to February. Ice canoe

See **CARNIVAL 15**

Protect

From T4

son touches a cold object, such as the steering wheel of a car, or cold wind touches the body. Heat can also leave the body through evaporation, such as when someone sweats while running, shoveling snow or otherwise exerting themselves in cold weather.

People also can lose heat by breathing in cold air and breathing out warm, moist air, said Dr. E. John Wipfler III, a clinical professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine and an attending emergency physician at OSF Healthcare St Francis Medical Center in Peoria.

Just breathing takes away a fair amount of thermal energy to warm the cold air taken into the lungs, he said.

COLD AND THE CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

When air temperatures drop, blood vessels constrict to prevent heat loss and to keep more blood around the body's core.

"Our body's mission is to preserve vital organs," Khraishah said. "Blood is moving away from the periphery to this area, which is why fingers and toes get cold."

But this increases blood pressure, and high blood pressure can lead to a heart attack or stroke, especially in people who already face higher cardiovascular risks. Extreme cold also may cause blood to thicken and become more prone to clotting, which likewise raises the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Khraishah published a paper in the journal *Stroke* last year that found extreme temperatures — both hot and cold — increased the risk of dying from a stroke. Other studies have

shown a greater risk of death from multiple cardiovascular conditions — especially heart failure — during periods of extreme cold. Hospitalizations for heart attacks have also been shown to rise following cold temperature spells.

COLD AND THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

People with asthma, chronic lung disease, or other respiratory conditions or illnesses are at higher risk when temperatures drop because cold, dry air irritates the airways, Khraishah said. This leads to greater inflammation and causes muscles around the airways to constrict, which can lead to wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath or a burning feeling in the chest, especially during exertion.

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO ILLNESS

In general, cold weather can make people more susceptible to illness, Wipfler said.

"When cold weather occurs, people tend to congregate indoors, in more crowded environments, making it easier for germs to spread," he said. What's more, some viruses can survive better in the cold, and the human immune system may lose some of its effectiveness.

The cold and dry air "may dry out mucous membranes that cover the nose, mouth and throat," Khraishah said. "If you get exposed to viruses or bacteria, they can get trapped in those membranes, so you lose your baseline of defense."

HYPOTHERMIA AND THE BRAIN

Blood vessel constriction because of the cold can impair cognitive function, Wipfler said.

This is especially a problem if hypothermia takes hold, which happens when core body temperature drops below 95

degrees Fahrenheit. Hypothermia can be caused by exposure to extreme cold or may occur during less cold temperatures if the body gets chilled from rain, sweat or being in cold water.

Warning signs of hypothermia include shivering, confusion, slurred speech, slow breathing, memory loss, drowsiness, exhaustion, a puffy or swollen face and pale skin. Babies experiencing hypothermia may have bright, red skin and very low energy.

Hypothermia is a medical emergency, and early warning signs such as shivering should never be ignored, Wipfler said.

"Once you stop shivering, your chances of fixing yourself are gone," he said. By that time, the brain stops working properly and people are unable to make logical decisions. "Some of the last things people do in severe hypothermia is they may start thinking they are getting too hot and remove their clothes."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends seeking immediate medical help for hypothermia. If that isn't available, restore body heat by getting the person into a warm room or shelter, removing wet clothing, warming their chest, neck, head and groin area with blankets, towels or sheets, and giving them warm drinks but no alcohol.

FROSTBITE

Prolonged exposure to the cold, when less blood flows to the extremities, also can cause frostbite. People with poor blood circulation are at higher risk. Warning signs include numbness, pale or waxy skin, redness or pain.

The CDC recommends immediately getting out of the cold and into a warmer environment if this occurs. Avoid rubbing the frostbitten area or walking on frostbitten feet or toes, as this

can cause more damage. Instead, put the frostbitten areas in warm — not hot — water. If this is not available, use body heat from other parts of the body to warm the area, such as by placing frostbitten hands or fingers in an armpit. Do not use heating pads or heat from a stove, as the affected areas may easily burn.

WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE

Both the very old and the very young are more vulnerable to the cold than people in other age groups, Wipfler said.

Older adults may have chronic illnesses such as diabetes, which prevents proper blood flow, or take medications that make it harder for them to stay warm. Memory problems can prevent people from remembering to dress appropriately for cold weather, and thyroid problems can make it tougher for the body to properly regulate its temperature.

"People who are very old may have the disadvantage of being less able to shiver and generate heat because of their lower muscle mass," Wipfler said. "And the very young do not have the mental capacity to communicate well or the ability to change their environment. Also, children have larger body surface area relative to body mass, so a higher chance for hypothermia and other cold injuries."

HOW TO KEEP WARM

Wipfler said the first step to preventing harm from the cold is to wear the right clothing, especially when going outdoors for a long period of time. "Dress for success and avoid being unprepared and exposed to the elements. Make sure no skin is left exposed. Don't forget to wear a neck wrap, a hat and gloves, not just a jacket."

Staying active while out in the

cold helps generate body heat, but too much exertion can have the opposite effect, Khraishah said. "Avoid excessive physical activity because you will sweat and lose heat."

He suggested using extra blankets to keep warm but not electric blankets, which are a fire hazard.

Wipfler said warm drinks may help people stay warm outdoors, but alcohol should be avoided. "It can make you feel warmer, but it dilates blood vessels and you pee more so you dehydrate. And alcohol interferes with the ability to think straight."

Smoking should also be avoided, he said.

If caught out in the cold or wind, Wipfler suggested seeking shelter behind something that might block the wind or staying active to warm up. "If you don't have the right clothing and can't get to a warmer environment, work on generating heat," he said. "Jump up and down to create thermal energy."

Shivering is another way to generate heat, Wipfler said. "The main reason you shiver is that the brain detects you are getting cold and sends a signal to the body to increase adrenaline. You can make yourself shiver by tightening your muscles repeatedly, which will increase body temperature as energy is used in this muscle activity."

And don't rely on the thermometer to signal when cold weather is too cold, Khraishah said. People who are used to living in colder regions may fare better than those who live in warmer climates and are suddenly exposed to the cold, for example.

"What your body is used to compared to what it's facing is more important than a magic number," he said. "What's cold in Arizona is mild in Cleveland."

Carnival

From T4

races are making a surprising comeback, for instance. Admission will be free for the race, scheduled for Feb. 9.

The annual festival's common featured events include ice slides, human foosball, dog sledding, sleigh rides, tubing, ice skating, ax throwing, ice fishing, hockey and musical performances.

Tounes et plaisanteries (tunes and jokes) with Canadian comedian Mariana Mazza,

guests & DJ Danick Bastien kick off Feb. 7. On Feb. 8, the Unity Electro Fest will feature MVN-GO, Tizi, Capozzi, Habstrakt, Ben Willo and Tomduno. Feb. 13, Soiree Hip Hop will feature performances from Eman and Souldia. Feb. 14, Soiree Franco will feature David Pineau and Sara Dufour. Closing out the

carnival's musical performances, there will be a Night Parade & 80s After Show with Karma Cameleons on Feb. 15.

Colorful lights, dancing, electro music — all that and more will be on display at the carnival's night parades next year. On Feb. 8, an approximately 30-minute parade will march

through downtown. On Feb. 15, another one will walk through the upper city — circus acts fully on display.

Visitors can also expect to see massive ice sculptures throughout the city, ice baths, food, drinks and fun games for the whole family.

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Your best bets if you're prone to nighttime snacking

Metro

Calorie-conscious individuals may wonder if eating at night or after a certain time can derail their diets and fitness regimens. The jury is still out on whether eating at night can pack on the pounds or not, with various health recommendations contradicting one another. However, if one does choose to snack at night, there may be a smart way to do so.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Weight Control Information Network says that a calorie is a calorie no matter when it is consumed. That means it doesn't matter if calories are consumed in the morning, afternoon or evening. It is how many are consumed and the amount of physical activity individuals perform that will affect their weights. Conversely, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics says they're not sure

if a calorie is a calorie no matter when it is consumed. Their research and data from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine's Center for Weight and Eating Disorders indicates that when food is consumed late at night the body is more likely to store those calories as fat and gain weight rather than burn it off as energy. Certain animal studies show that food is processed differently depending on the time of day it was consumed.

But what is a person to do when hunger pangs hit at night and one fears that their rumbling stomach may interrupt their sleep? According to the nutrition and fitness experts at MyFitnessPal, powered by Under Armour, stick to a snack that is between 100 and 200 calories. Choose a food that is high in protein, fiber or healthy fats, which will be more likely to keep

a person satiated throughout the night. Apples and peanut butter, string cheese and fruit, or whole grain crackers and Greek yogurt can be healthy, satisfying nighttime snacks.

Avoid sugary, calorie-dense foods, which may be hard to digest and can compromise sleep quality.

More studies may be necessary to determine the relationship between body weight and snacking at night. In the meantime, nighttime snackers should choose healthy foods when reaching for a late night bite to eat.



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Understanding depression and its triggers

Metro

Many people periodically have bad days when they just seem to be in a bad mood. When a bad mood isn't short-lived, this might be a potential indicator of depression.

Depression is a common mental disorder that, according to the World Health Organization, affects more than 300 million people across the globe. The WHO notes that despite the fact that there are known and highly effective treatments for depression, fewer than half of those suffering from depression receive such treatments. Furthermore, in many countries, fewer than 10 percent of people with depression receive treatment.

Learning about depression and how to recognize its symptoms may compel people battling it to seek treatment for this very common and treatable disorder.

WHY DO I HAVE DEPRESSION?

Everyone has a bad day here or there, but people with depression may wonder why theirs are more than just a bad day. The WHO notes that de-

pression is a byproduct of a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors. Exposure to adverse life events, such as unemployment, the death of a loved one or psychological trauma, can increase people's risk of developing depression.

Depression also may be caused by physical conditions. The WHO says cardiovascular disease can lead to depression.

What are the symptoms of depression?

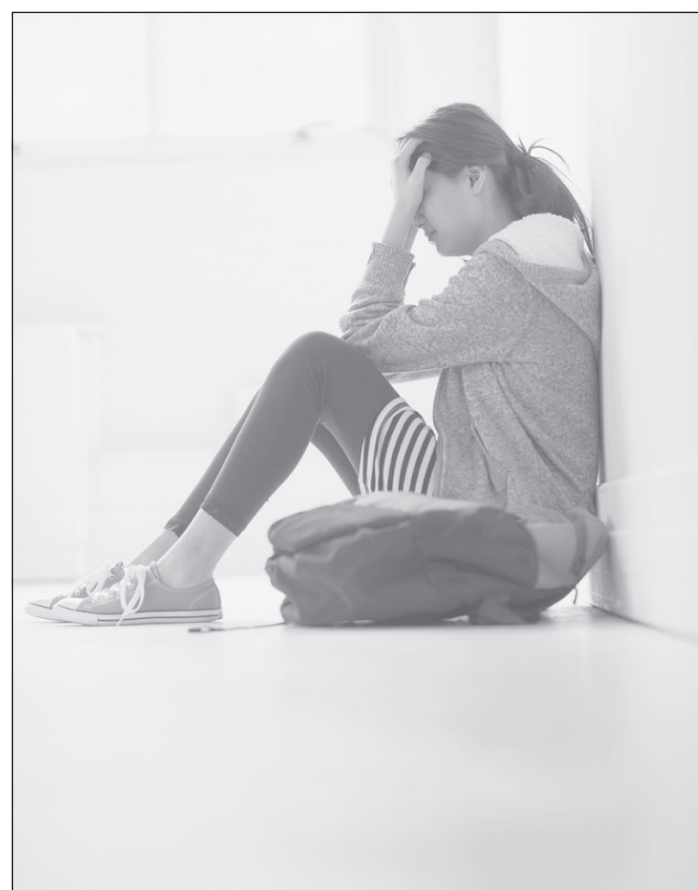
The Mayo Clinic notes that one in 10 people whose depression goes untreated commit suicide. That only highlights the importance of recognizing the symptoms of depression and acting once any have been identified or suspected. Symptoms can include:

- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Fatigue
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and helplessness
- Pessimism and hopelessness
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness or sleeping too

much

- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Loss of interest in things once deemed pleasurable, including sex
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Aches, pains, headaches, or cramps that won't go away
- Digestive problems that don't get better, even with treatment
- Persistent sad, anxious or 'empty' feelings
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts

Anyone who has exhibited any of the aforementioned symptoms or even those who haven't but suspect they might be suffering from depression should visit a physician immediately. The WHO notes there are a variety of treatments available to people who have been diagnosed with depression, and doctors will determine which might be the best for each patient. To make that determination, doctors may inquire about the duration and severity of symptoms as well as family history and whether or not the patient has a history of



drug or alcohol abuse.

Depression is a common mental disorder that too often goes undiagnosed. Seeking

help the moment symptoms are detected or suspected can help people overcome the disorder.

3 fun ways families can get fit together

Metro

The buddy system is widely used to help men and women get in shape. Friends can encourage their workout partners to get off the couch on days when their motivation might be waning, and partners can return that favor when the roles are reversed. And the benefits of the buddy system are not exclusive to adults, as families can rely on it to make sure moms, dads and kids each get the exercise they need.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ongoing exercise can help people of all ages control their weight, improve their mental health and mood and reduce their risk for various diseases, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes. And



the benefits may go beyond those normally associated with exercise, particularly for young people. A 2009 analysis of the fitness records of 1.2 million Swedish men born

between 1950 and 1976 found that the more exercise they had during adolescence, the more likely they were to be professionally successful as adults.

Getting fit as a family can be easy. The following are just a few ways parents and their children can get in shape together.

1. START DANCING.

Dancing isn't just a fun activity, it's also a very healthy one. While dancing might often be categorized as a recreational activity, such a categorization overlooks the many health benefits of cutting a rug. Dancing is a great cardiovascular exercise that works multiple parts of the body. Routine cardiovascular exercise has been linked

to reduced risk for heart disease and other ailments. In addition, a 2009 study from researchers in South Korea found that hip hop dancing can boost mood and lower stress.

2. SCHEDULE DAILY EXERCISE TIME.

Parents and their children are as busy as ever, so it makes sense to schedule family exercise time just like you schedule family meals or outings to the museum. Kids who compete in sports may already get enough physical activity each day. The CDC recommends children participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day, so kids who aren't playing sports can spend an hour each day sweating alongside mom and dad.

3. WALK AFTER DINNER.

Families who routinely dine together can delay doing the dishes to walk off their meals. A walk around the neighborhood after dinner provides solid family time, but it's also a great way to stay healthy. A 2017 study from researchers at the University of Warwick that was published in the International Journal of Obesity found that people who took 15,000 or more steps each day tended to have healthy body mass indexes, or BMIs. That's an important benefit, as an unhealthy BMI is often a characteristic of obesity.

Getting fit as a family can be fun and pay long-term dividends for parents and children alike.

Simple ways to look and feel your best

Metro

At the dawn of a new year, many people resolve to reach for new heights. On the path to personal growth or improvement, one may find that making a few adjustments can greatly increase confidence and satisfaction.

The adage 'don't judge a book by its cover' can inspire people to look beyond the outer shell to what lies beneath. However, how a person presents himself or herself undeniably has an impact on how this person is perceived. Therefore, individuals can make small changes that improve how they look and feel about themselves. This, in turn, may make people more self-assured.

■ Undergo a teeth-whitening treatment. A bright, welcoming smile portrays friendliness and confidence. People who hide their smiles because of yellowing teeth can find that investing in at-home whitening strips or gels, or working with a dentist for professional whitening services, can dramatically change their looks.

■ Skip the pockets. Rely on

clothing that is pocket-less, especially if you're prone to putting hands in pockets. Body language experts say that people put their hands in their pockets when they are uncomfortable or unsure of themselves. Keeping one's hands free can project more confidence in all they do.

■ Get a tailored wardrobe. Ill-fitting clothing may tell others you don't care about your appearance, even if you do. Sometimes off-the-rack clothing just doesn't fit as well as a person may hope, especially if that man or woman is between sizes. Working with a tailor or seamstress to make clothing fit better can help people feel more comfortable in everything they do.

■ Practice better posture. Standing tall with shoulders back and head held high can do everything from project assertiveness to help clothes fit and fall better.

■ Properly groom your brows. Men and women both can benefit from well-tended brows. These eye-framing wonders are one area on the face people tend to notice

first. It pays to keep them well-groomed and neat.

■ Start exercising. Exer-

cise does wonders for not only maintaining a healthy, fit body, but it also can improve mood.

These suggestions are relatively easy tweaks to help a person put forth his or her best self.



METRO

Start with a bright smile and then work on other methods to help you feel better and more confident.



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Strategies to control appetite can help you limit intake

Metro

Hunger can be a formidable foe, especially for people attempting to lose weight. When hunger strikes, various appetite-control strategies can help people avoid overeating or eating during those times when boredom is more to blame than an empty belly.

■ **Eat slowly.** When a person eats, a series of signals are sent to the brain from digestive hormones secreted by the gastrointestinal tract. These signals produce a feeling of pleasure and satiety in the brain, but it can take awhile for the brain to receive them. By chewing slowly, people can give the signals more time to reach their brains, potentially preventing them from overeating.

■ **Choose the right snacks.** The right snacks can make it easier to eat more slowly. Instead of reaching for potato chips or pretzels, both of which can be eaten quickly and picked up by the handful, choose snacks that are both healthy and require a little work. Carrots dipped in hummus or baked tortilla chips with low-fat salsa or bean dip are low-calorie snacks that also require some work between bites. The time it takes to dip between bites affords more time for the digestive tract to release

signals to the brain that you're full.

■ **Reach for fiber first.** Another way to conquer hunger without overeating is to reach for fiber before eating other parts of your meal. Vegetables are rich in fiber, but since veggies are often served as side dishes, many people tend to eat them only after they've eaten their main courses. That can contribute to overeating. Fiber fills you up, so by eating the high-fiber portions of your meal first, you're less likely to overeat before your brain receives the signals that your stomach is full. Consider eating vegetables as an appetizer or, if the entire meal is served at once, clear your plate of vegetables before diving into the main course or other side dishes.

■ **Drink water.** Perhaps the best, and least expensive, way to control appetite and ensure you don't overeat is to drink more water. A 2010 study funded by the Institute for Public Health and Water Research that included 48 adults between the ages of 55 and 75 found that people who drank two eight-ounce glasses of water right before a meal consumed 75 to 90 fewer calories during the ensuing meal than study participants who did not consume

water prior to their meals. Over the course of 12 weeks, participants who

drank water before meals three times per day lost roughly five pounds more

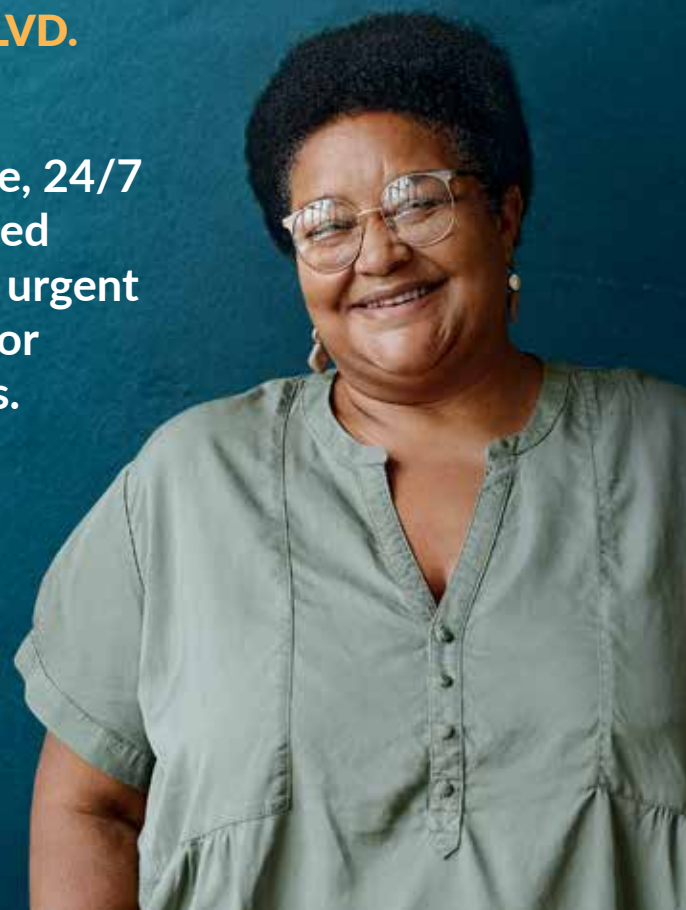
than those who did not increase their water intake.

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Stay mentally fresh during the workday

Metro

Energy levels tend to ebb and flow throughout a typical workday. A cup of coffee may provide some caffeine-infused spark in the morning, but a big lunch can squash energy later in the afternoon.

Waning mental sharpness as the workday progresses can compromise productivity, making it more difficult for workers to complete projects on time. That, in turn, can contribute to stress. In fact, in its '2017 Stress in America' survey, the American Psychological Association found that 58 percent of Americans say work is a significant source of stress.

Staying mentally fresh during a workday can pay a host of benefits, and the following are just a few ways to maintain mental focus until quitting time.

■ **Exercise regularly.** The physical benefits of routine exercise are well documented. But even the most ardent fitness enthusiasts may not realize just how big an impact physical activity is having on their brains. The Har-



vard Medical School notes that exercise stimulates regions of the brain that release a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF, which rewires memory circuits so they can

function better. A stronger memory can help workers recall project details and deadlines more easily, even as the workday draws to a close.

■ **Avoid the 'quick fix.'** Relying on a beverage or snack

to provide a quick mental boost may end up compromising your mental sharpness. Foods and beverages that are high in sugar may provide an immediate energy boost, but that spike is

almost instantly followed by a crash that can adversely affect your mental sharpness. Stick to healthy snacks, such as fruits and vegetables, and avoid late afternoon cups of coffee, which studies have shown make it harder to fall asleep at night, thereby compromising your energy levels the next day.

■ **Take a walk outdoors.** Spending some time outdoors during a lunch break, or even a quick, post-lunch stroll around the office grounds, can provide a break for the brain. That break can help the brain refocus, improving productivity as a result. One great way to get outdoors during busy workdays is to conduct meetings outside when the weather permits. This gives everyone a chance to recharge their brains in the great outdoors, and few people would prefer a dusty conference room to a nearby park or picnic area outdoors.

Various strategies can help working professionals maintain their mental sharpness throughout the workday.

3 tips to overcome everyday aches and pains

Metro

Pain is a significant concern for many people. Estimates from the International Association for the Study of Pain suggest that one in five adults across the globe suffer from pain.

Pain can affect anyone, even people who have not been in an accident or suffered an injury while playing a sport or performing another physical activity. For example, lower back pain, which can be caused by sitting at a desk for long stretches of time, is the most common type of chronic pain in the United States. Such pain may be unavoidable, but that does not mean it and other

types of everyday aches and pains cannot be overcome.

1. BEGIN A WELL-ROUNDED EXERCISE REGIMEN.

Regular exercise that includes both strength training and cardiovascular exercise increases blood flow and helps build a strong core. A strong core supports the spine and reduces the pressure on it, making it less likely people who sit for long stretches at a time will end their days with lower back pain. Routine exercise also helps other areas of the body by keeping muscles loose and flexible. Before beginning a new exercise regimen, men and women, especial-

ly those with existing aches and pains, should consult their physicians about which exercises they should do and which they might want to avoid.

2. EMPLOY RICE.

RICE, which stands for rest, ice, compression, and elevation, can help men and women overcome the aches and pains that result as the body ages and tendons begin to lose some of their elasticity. RICE might be most helpful for people who have been diagnosed with tendinitis. Athletes over 40 who engage in activities that require repetitive motion might need to take more days off be-

tween rounds of golf or other competitive and/or repetitive activities. If tendinitis flares up, take some time away, icing any sore areas, wrapping them in bandages, and elevating them while resting. Athletes rarely want to sit on the sidelines, but a few days off can go a long way toward alleviating the pain associated with tendinitis.

3. RECOGNIZE YOUR BODY MAY DEVELOP SOME LIMITATIONS.

Age should not prevent you from being physically active, and numerous studies have touted the benefits of continuing to exercise into your golden years. However,

as the body ages, muscle fibers become less dense, resulting in a loss of flexibility that increases the risk of injury and/or soreness. As men and women grow older, they shouldn't abandon activities like gardening or strength training. But they may need to scale back on the intensity with which they perform such activities. Doing so can prevent the kinds of muscle strains associated with aging.

Pain affects more than one billion people across the globe. But some simple strategies can help people overcome pain and enjoy a rich quality of life.

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