

# HEALTHCARE & WELLNESS

*Of Western North Carolina*



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# Superfood or super fooled?



It is common knowledge that enjoying a well-rounded diet of foods that boast diverse nutrient profiles can help give the body what it needs to stay healthy. Many foods are healthy, some less so.

But are there really “superfoods” that are much healthier than others?

For some time people were led to believe so, but nutrition is much more complex. Foods touted to knock out free radicals in the body, which are believed to contribute to various illnesses, are often characterized as superfoods.

There’s no scientifically based or regulated definition of the term “superfood,” despite widespread use of the term and even its inclusion in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

It’s believed the term superfood originated in the early twentieth century as part of a food marketing strategy by the United Fruit Company to promote its major import of bananas around the time of World War I. Later, bananas were touted as superfoods in medical journals, which gave the term some

additional credibility.

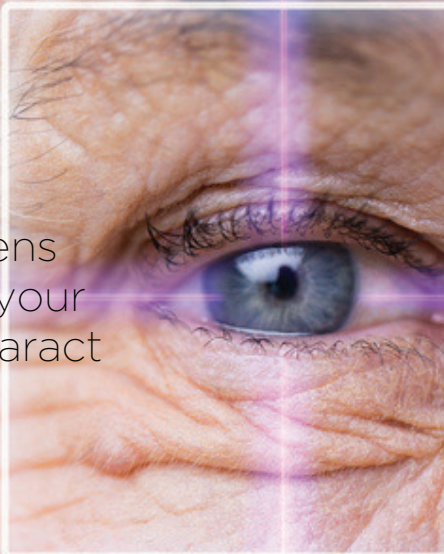
Seeing as the superfood moniker translates to superior sales, it’s had some staying power, along with a little controversy. Consumers must wade through the hype and realize they can

vary their diets accordingly to maximize nutritional focus without being lured in by a superfood characterization. Many foods are beneficial. And as always, questions regarding health and nutrition can be discussed with a health care provider.

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# THE TRUSTED ALTERNATIVE TO ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

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# What is Regenexx? *Learn about this alternative to orthopedic surgery*

Regenexx procedures provide non-surgical treatment options for those suffering from pain related to osteoarthritis, joint injuries, spine pain, overuse conditions, and common sports injuries.

Regenexx has helped thousands of patients improve their quality of life, return to the activities they enjoy, and avoid the need for surgery or joint replacement.

Regenexx can be beneficial for patients experiencing a variety of types of injuries or pain, allowing them to live without pain and regain their mobility and function.

When other forms of treatment don't seem to work and you don't want to deal with the downtime, scarring, and recovery process associated with most surgical procedures, Regenexx can often be a useful alternative.

## How does it work?

Utilizing breakthrough processes regarding bone marrow and blood platelets, Regenexx is able to relieve joint or bone pain, torn or strained tendons and ligaments, and other common injuries and degenerative conditions.



Our own cellular mechanisms are what stimulate the healing process when we injure ourselves. However, as we age, our bodies begin to struggle to supply enough of these cells to recover from injuries.

Regenexx procedures are able to remedy this issue by delivering a high volume of growth factors and bone marrow directly into the injured area of the body, allowing it to recover naturally.

Regenexx physicians are musculoskeletal experts with extensive training and experience in the diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal conditions, as well as complex, image-guided injections of your body's own healing agents to treat orthopedic issues

## Is it right for me?

Many patients love Regenexx because there is little to no downtime or recovery associated with the treatment.

The Regenexx process doesn't involve general anesthesia, scalpels, or stitches. The minimally invasive outpatient procedures means patients can return home immediately afterward.

Regenexx is ideal for busy professionals who don't have time to recover from surgery and aren't interested in a lengthy recovery. While some patients may feel a bit of soreness after the procedure, the area should be feeling back to normal within only a short while.

An initial consultation will

determine if you are a candidate for Regenexx and formulate a treatment plan tailored to your needs and condition.

While insurance will cover preliminary and follow-up examinations, it will likely not cover Regenexx. Asheville Regenerative Orthopedics & Sports Medicine, the region's leading provider of Regenexx, will work with patients to find a financing plan.

## Some of the common conditions and injuries Regenexx treatments are used for include:

- Osteoarthritis of joints and spine
- Tendon and ligament tears
- Cartilage damage, meniscus tears
- Bulging discs, herniated discs and disc tears
- Tennis elbow
- Torn rotator cuffs

## What are the benefits?

Traditional pain management solutions like prescription medications only address symptoms temporarily, if at all. Meanwhile, surgery is often associated with

long recovery times and significant risks. Regenexx is a less invasive option that provides long-lasting relief.

## Some of the benefits include:

- No surgery required
- Doesn't employ medication or drugs — it uses your body's own healing abilities
- Treats a wide variety of joint, muscle, tendon, bone, and ligament issues and injuries
- Treatments are quick, with a full treatment regimen only taking about 2-8 days
- Relatively painless (about the same as a shot at the doctor)
- Little to no downtime
- Faster recovery
- No scarring
- Safe and effective, with complications being rare (only mild to moderate if reported)

*Asheville Regenerative Orthopedics & Sports Medicine is the region's leading provider of the state-of-the-art Regenexx treatment. To schedule a consultation, contact 828-528-6218 or visit [avlregenerative.com](http://avlregenerative.com).*

## What do knee ligament injuries feel like?

By Dr. Christie Lehman

Asheville Regenerative Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

Knee ligament injuries are a common yet complex concern, often resulting from sports activities, accidents, or daily wear and tear. Each ligament injury presents uniquely, with varying symptoms and degrees of severity.

The four primary ligaments in the knee have distinct purposes and vulnerabilities, pivotal in maintaining knee stability and mobility. However, due to their different locations and functions within the knee joint, the nature and symptoms of injuries to each can vary significantly.

### • Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL)

The ACL is crucial for knee stability, especially in rotational movements. When it tears, individuals often report a distinct popping sound, followed by immediate swelling and a feeling of instability. The knee may feel like it's giving way, especially when changing direction.

### • Posterior cruciate ligament (PCL)

PCL injuries are less common but can be equally debilitating. Typically caused by a direct impact to the front of the knee, this injury often leads to mild pain and swelling. Patients might feel discomfort, particularly when kneeling or crouching.

### • Lateral collateral ligament (LCL)

The LCL, located on the outer side of the knee, is susceptible to injury from direct blows or sudden twists. Patients may experience pain and tenderness along the outer knee, stiffness, and swelling when injured. An LCL tear can also lead to a feeling of instability when walking or changing direction.

### • Medial collateral ligament (MCL)

Injuries to the MCL, the ligament on the inner side of the knee, commonly occur due to blows to the outer knee.



Symptoms include pain and tenderness along the inner knee, swelling, and a sensation of the knee being loose or unstable.

*Contact Asheville Regenerative Orthopedics & Sports Medicine to learn about innovative nonsurgical therapies to help minimize pain and enhance function in cases of a ligament tear. Call 828-944-8378 or visit [avlregenerative.com](http://avlregenerative.com).*



# Put your best fork forward: Choosing food that fuels a healthy lifestyle

By Rebecca Rothwell  
Registered Dietitian, Haywood Regional  
Medical Center

Food can mean a number of things to us. It can be a source of delight, a means to gather friends and loved ones around a common table, or even an instrument of comfort at the end of a long day.

But most importantly, food is fuel. The bonds between good food and good health are strong, and it's crucial to fuel our body with the proper nutrients to stay healthy.

While a deficit of the right foods in our daily diet can lead to increased health complications and poor disease management, making sure we're including the right foods in a balanced diet can help us take some control and ownership in our overall health. Furthermore, a well-balanced diet plays an important role in the healing and recovery process when we do find ourselves in health situations that are beyond our control.

The bottom line: healthy food fuels a healthy body. It sounds simple in theory, but the reality is that a healthy, balanced diet can be a challenge for many of us.

By learning a few tips and tricks, you can put your best fork forward and fuel your body for the long haul.

## It takes a village

You've heard the phrase, "It takes a village," right? Well, it takes a "village" or variety of foods to get all the healthy nutrients your body needs. No one food has it all. Incorporating a variety of foods can ensure that your body is getting the right mix of vitamins and nutrients. Choose from the five food groups encompassing fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods and dairy to ensure that you're getting the right variety of food in your diet.

## Eat in Technicolor

When it comes to food, natural color often

signifies specific nutrients that can help your body stay healthy and ward off disease. Beta-carotene-rich orange foods like carrots and squash provide vitamin A. Green veggies like spinach, broccoli and kale are storehouses of fiber, vitamins A, E and C and potassium. Some red and blue foods like cherries, cranberries and blueberries are packed with antioxidants that can improve your health.

## Read the labels

Before you toss that box or jar into your basket, take a moment to read the label. Nutrition facts, like the amount of fat, carbohydrates, protein and vitamins, are calculated per serving. So if you plan on having two servings, you would double the amounts and percentages specified on the label. Also, check the ingredients. Aim to buy foods with natural ingredients and little added sugar.



Rebecca Rothwell, MS, RDN, LDN

Learn more about healthy eating habits at [MyHaywoodRegional.com/nutrition-education](https://MyHaywoodRegional.com/nutrition-education). If you'd like to speak to a dietitian about how to incorporate healthy eating habits into your routine, contact Haywood Regional Medical Center at 800.424.DOCS or visit [MyHaywoodRegional.com](https://MyHaywoodRegional.com) to schedule an appointment. Rebecca Rothwell, MS, RD, LDN, CDCES is a Registered Dietitian at Haywood Regional Medical Center.



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# The best kept secrets of hospice

By Patrick Davis Hospice Chaplain

As a Hospice Chaplain, I am often met with the question, “How can you do this work and not get depressed being around grief and death?”

One of the best-kept secrets of hospice is that while there are naturally experience tears of joy as we offer what hospice does best: We Celebrate Life!

Hospice does not hasten the end of life; rather, it deepens the quality and experience of life by having more time to form meaningful connections with family and friends. I know in the case of my own parents, they were relieved to stay home and not go to medical appointments each week.

It is challenging to explain this to caregivers and others who have never experienced Hospice care for a loved one. How can we paint a picture of some of the most intimate moments

that occur for a family when they have the support of hospice?

Recently, one of my friends who received the services of hospice wrote this public review that beautifully describes one family’s experience:

“I cannot say enough about the amazing, compassionate care my family received as we passing of our son. Our son’s nurse was so tender and caring, not just for our son but for all the family, guiding us along the path. The love and conversations our son had with our chaplain helped ease the loss we were about to face.

While it has been two years since we began this journey, the team at hospice has never lost sight of us and continues to support us through the grieving process. I wish I could have taken pictures of our son when one of the hospice team would show up, as it always brought a smile to his face. We

will be forever grateful to Haywood Hospice and Palliative Care for their ongoing love and support.”

Another secret of hospice is that the services are for the family, not just the patient, including emotional and spiritual support.

One patient approaching her 80th birthday was surprised one week-end to have her home filled with 80 balloons made possible by her family and hospice team. Another family rented a hall to hold a celebration of life for their mother months before she died. They relished the pictures of her smiling and the people gathered to share photos, stories, music, and good food.

Hospice efforts are enhanced by the recently formed End-of-Life Coalition, which provides grief healing through support groups, workshops, and programs.



**Patrick Davis, Chaplain for Haywood Hospice and End-of-Life Coalition**

All these programs are made possible thanks to funding from the Haywood Health Foundation.

*To learn more or for a free hospice consultation, call 828-452-5039. To learn about the end-of-life coalition, contact Patrick Davis at 402-933-9393 or [patrickdavis@me.com](mailto:patrickdavis@me.com). To learn about grief support groups, contact Leigh Ann at 828-606-4123.*

## A Hospice Volunteer with Special Talents



Leigh Ann Mertens came to Haywood Hospice with a wish to become a patient care volunteer in the home. However, we realized that she had special talents that could help in other ways!

She now provides weekly Mindful Movement and Guided Meditation classes for grievers and caregivers. She also co-facilitates a Grief Book Club every Thursday.

One participant shared: “Leigh Ann pours support, kindness, joy, healing, and relentless PRESENCE in her Mindful Movement classes...a tremendous social/ psychological/ physical resource! Every single human can benefit from her classes--we all struggle with something.”

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# The benefits of a Thai massage

By Sundarah Wellness

Thai massage is a fully clothed holistic bodywork experience, often likened to a kind of lazy man's yoga. But there is more to it!

Yes, you get to show up in your comfy clothes. And sure, you get to lay on a big cushy floor mat. And of course, the practitioner moves and massages you until both body and mind are about the consistency of taffy. But it's more complex than that!

While there are various traditions and schools of thought in Thai massage, it commonly combines several practices, including acupressure, Ayurveda, and assisted yoga. The practitioner works along the meridian lines of the body to release energy blockages and increase blood flow.

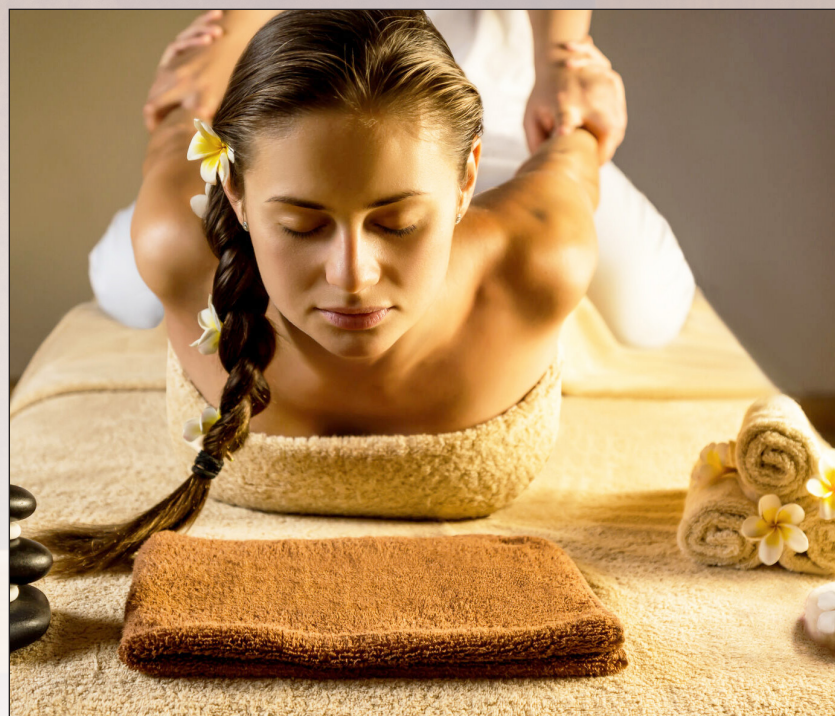
Breathwork is a crucial aspect, as you are encouraged to control your breathing and approach a meditative state. For Thai massage, you wear loose, comfortable clothing, and there are no massage oils or lotions used.

Moving from the massage table to the Thai mat, you will discover a whole new dimension in bodywork. Thai massage is not limited to the restrictions inherent in massaging a person on a waist-height table; instead, Thai practitioners, working on a floor mat, have a much wider range of movement-based treatments at their disposal.

Manipulating the body in various ways, the practitioner can massage different muscle groups that would otherwise be inaccessible, use their bodyweight to apply more pressure if needed, and lever the body such that it massages itself. These applied stretches are especially great for those who aren't particularly flexible to increase movement and reach in their joints.

**Thai massage is a wonderful modality with so many benefits.**

*Thai massage is one of the services offered by Sandarah Wellness located in Waynesville and Maggie Valley. Those interested in trying a shorter*



*session for their first time, we Sandarah offers Communi-Thai events the second Sunday of every month, where you can book a short 20-minute*

*session at a dollar per minute. [www.sundarahwellness.com](http://www.sundarahwellness.com) or 828-944-0288.*



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# Teens face a litany of mental health challenge in today's society

Adolescence is a unique and formative time. Physical, emotional and social changes, including exposure to poverty, abuse, social pressure or violence can make teens vulnerable to mental health problems.

Protecting teens from adversity, promoting social-emotional well-being and ensuring access to mental health care are critical for their mental health.

Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 7 10–19 year olds (14%) experience mental health conditions, yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated.

Adolescents with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma in seeking help, educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, physical ill-health and human rights violations.

## Mental health determinants

Adolescence is a crucial period for developing social and emotional habits important for mental well-being. These

include:

- adopting healthy sleep patterns
- exercising regularly
- developing coping, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills
- learning to manage emotions.

Protective and supportive environments in the family, at school and in the wider community are important.

Multiple factors affect mental health. The more risk factors teens are exposed to, the greater the potential impact on their mental health. Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include exposure to adversity, pressure to conform with peers and exploration of identity.

Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future.

Other important determinants include the quality of their home life and relationships with peers. Violence (especially sexual violence and bullying), harsh



parenting and severe and socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health.

Some teens are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions, stigma, discrimination or exclusion, or lack of access to quality support and services.

These include adolescents living in fragile settings; chronic illness, autism spectrum disorder, an intellectual disability or other neurological condition; teen parents; orphans; and teens from minority groups or with different sexual orientations.

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# Skin cancer still poses a threat in winter

Skin cancer may be something on the minds of beachgoers and summer revelers frolicking around the pool. After all, when the sun is blazing hot and one's skin reddens after mere minutes outside, it's hard to ignore the potential for skin damage. But summer isn't the only time of year that skin must be protected.

Ultraviolet radiation is just as dangerous in the winter as it is in the summer, and people should continue to care for and protect their skin as the weather gets colder. In fact, sunscreen is something that should be worn year-round.

Various lifestyle choices increase a person's risk for skin damage and even skin cancer.

• **Spending time outdoors in high altitudes:** UV rays are especially intense in higher altitudes. The risk for

sunburn increases because the thinner atmosphere isn't able to block many of the sun's most harmful rays.

• **Enjoying snow-related activities:** Snow reflects up to 80 percent of the sun's rays. Individuals may not realize that time spent on the slopes can result in sun damage that is just as harmful as that caused after a day at the beach.

• **Heading out on cloudy days:** Fog and clouds will not deter UVA rays from reaching the surface of the Earth. UVA rays, which are present throughout the year, can penetrate fog and clouds and even glass, warns the Skin Cancer Foundation.

• **Traveling to warm climates in winter:** It's common for people to try to escape the cold and snow by vacationing in tropical locales during the winter. Many may mistakenly think it's



a good idea to use a tanning bed to get a golden glow prior to departing. The Mayo Clinic reports that UV light from tanning beds is 12 times as intense as light emitted by the sun. Couple that with time spent in the tropical sun and severe damage can occur to unprotected skin.

Protecting skin from the sun is a year-round endeavor. When thinking about skin damage and skin cancer prevention, do not overlook the lips. Use a lip moisturizer with an SPF of at least 15 and sunscreen on the rest of the exposed parts of the body every day.



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# Beach smiles are made in winter

By Michael Gillespie Family Dentistry

In the realm of fitness, the adage goes, "Beach bodies are made in winter." Similarly, the colder months present an opportune time to not only sculpt your physique but also enhance your smile for upcoming summer activities and warmer weather.

## Teeth whitening

Nothing quite complements a summer-ready look like a brilliantly bright smile. Engaging in basic teeth whitening through a take-home system typically entails a 7- to 10-day treatment period. Utilizing a specially formulated gel and custom-made gel carriers that snugly fit over the arches, this method

can effortlessly lighten teeth by several shades during the more relaxed pace of winter.

For those with darker teeth, a more potent whitening agent can be expertly administered over multiple appointments at the dental office. Seize the moment to whiten your smile, ensuring it gleams for the radiant days

that lie ahead!

## Cosmetic enhancements

Beyond teeth whitening, consider the potential benefits of dental veneers, crowns, and fillings to address specific aesthetic concerns. Depending on the complexity of the treatment, multiple visits and temporary dental restorations may be neces-

sary to achieve the desired outcome.

The unhurried rhythm of winter makes it an optimal time to invest in an aesthetically pleasing smile that can become your confident signature.

## Regular dental maintenance

Imagine avoiding dental discomfort or restorative visits during the peak of summer. Winter, with its typically slower pace, offers a golden opportunity to seamlessly incorporate essential dental treatments into your routine.

Schedule any necessary repairs or preventive measures, taking advantage of the potential flexibility in appointment times. Addi-

tionally, many dental offices experience decreased activity during the colder months, translating to increased availability and potentially shorter waiting times.

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# Things to consider when shopping health insurance plans

Rare is the individual who goes a lifetime without a notable health condition, ailment or injury requiring surgery or medical treatment. Health plans help to defray the costs of such care.

Health insurance also provides free preventive care, such as vaccines and wellness visits. Without health insurance, individuals may delay much-needed medical care because of the cost until conditions become intolerable. At that point, extensive intervention may be needed or treatment may no longer be possible.

The following tips can help people choose health plans that work for their needs.

## Premium costs

The premium is the amount of money paid each month for a health insurance plan. The premium will differ depending on whether a single

individual will be insured, or if coverage will be extended to a spouse and/or children.

Individuals with no employer-sponsored health plan can shop the federal health insurance marketplace for a plan. One also can purchase a health plan directly from an insurer, but that is likely to be the most expensive route.



## Alphabet soup

Health plans are all about the acronyms. There are HMOs, PPOs, EPOs, and POS plans. Each of these offerings is unique in regard to coverage and requirements.

Generally speaking, an HMO is the least expensive initially but may be the most restrictive in choosing providers. A PPO has more provider options but higher out-of-pocket costs. EPO and POS plans fall in between. Shoppers need to determine their priorities before choosing plans.

## Deductibles, co-payments and co-insurance

Additional considerations when comparing health plans include deductibles, co-payments and co-insurance costs. Nearly all plans will feature some sort of combination of these costs, which are in addition to the deductible.

For example, there may be a \$20 co-payment required for standard visits and a higher amount for specialists. Deductibles are the amount of money that has to be spent before the plan starts paying for specific health care costs, like lab work or imaging.

Co-insurance is a percentage owed on certain procedures. For example, a patient may be responsible for 20% of surgery costs and the other 80% is covered by the plan. Plans typically will list the maximum out-of-pocket expense for the calendar year.

*Need help sorting through all the options? Mountain Projects offers free, unbiased assistance to explain options and walk through the federal marketplace health insurance application process. Appointments are available in person or over the phone by calling 828-452-1447*

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# New Year's resolutions for seniors

Seniors in particular can benefit from setting goals and aspirations with New Year's resolutions. Viewing life with a sense of purpose can have an improved sense of well-being, both physically and cognitively.

New Year's resolutions often focus on personal improvement, with health and wellness dominating the resolution landscape. Resolutions that are good for the body go hand in hand with improving brain health and function.

- **Find new workouts:** Investigate new fitness regimens or methods of movement. Try tai chi, yoga, swimming or pickle ball. As an extra incentive, a little exercise each day can result in



improved brain function in less than six months.

- **Start a new hobby:** Doing new things can be beneficial to the brain. So learning a new hobby, taking a class, or even learning to play a musical instrument can push the brain to improve from a cognitive standpoint.

- **Make more time for fun:** Repeated stress can have detrimental effects on the body and mind. Taking time to relax and enjoy oneself can tame stress, and in turn, alleviate issues affecting memory and cognition.

- **Practice mindfulness more often:** Mindfulness is an exercise in paying attention to one's surroundings, senses and more. Too often people are multi-tasking and never fully devoting their attention to one thing. Mindfulness gives the brain a break and brings a person into the present.

- **Eat a better diet:** The benefit of eating healthy foods extends beyond the waistline. Many of the foods that are good for the heart are important for preventing cognitive decline and dementias.



- **Declutter your space:** Resolve to get rid of extraneous items that are no longer serving a purpose beyond collecting dust. Having more room to move around can be safer, particularly if you need a cane or another assistive device, and there will be less to clean if you remove some clutter.

- **Make new social connections:** Socially-active older adults have better cognition and lower risks for depression than those who do not consistently reach out to friends. Aspire to make some new companions this year.

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# Underage drinking

## 3 things to keep in mind when talking to your teen



Alcohol is the most widely used substance of abuse among American youth.

Nearly 30% of teens have had at least one alcoholic drink by the age of 15 and 58 percent had consumed at least one drink by the time they turned 18. Those figures are in

spite of the legal drinking age being 21 across all of the United States.

Perhaps most troubling is that more than 7 million young people between the ages of 12 and 20 acknowledge having more than “just a few sips” of alcohol in the month. Youths

between the ages of 12 and 20 account for 11% of all alcohol consumed in the United States.

It's important that adults do not downplay the significance of underage youths consuming alcohol, as on average, alcohol is a factor in the deaths of more than 4,300 young people under the age of 21 every year.

Here's three tips for talking to teens about drinking.

### Ask open-ended questions

Listen to your child. This will help you to better understand their perspective on alcohol & potentially expand the conversation beyond “Do you drink alcohol?” By listening, you're sending the signal that you're available for them.

### Consider the setting and situation

Whether there's something showing alcohol on TV, you hear about a real-life situation involving alcohol, or you're simply in the

### Not Talking About Alcohol Still Sends Kids a Message

**Kids don't always have all the facts when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. If parents don't talk about the risks of underage drinking and substance use, their kids might not see any harm in trying alcohol and other substances.**

**Having a conversation allows parents to set clear rules about what they expect from their kids when it comes to alcohol and other drugs.**

grocery aisle or a restaurant, take it as an opportunity to talk about underage drinking.

### Use age-appropriate messages

It's never too early to start the conversation about underage drinking — and there's no stopping point. It's always important to keep the conversation going — just take the age of your audience into consideration.

# Keep it out of the Picture



# Guide Kids Away from Underage Drinking



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# Understanding obesity as a disease

By Leisa Denti

Health and Wellness Coach Blue Ridge Weight and Wellness

Obesity has become an epidemic in the United States. Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. These are among the leading causes of preventable, premature death.

The estimated annual cost of obesity-related care in the United States was nearly \$173 billion in 2019 dollars. Medical costs for adults who had obesity were \$1,861 higher than medical costs for people with healthy weight.



The Obesity Medical Association defines obesity as a “Chronic, relapsing, multifactorial, neurobehavioral disease, wherein an increase in body fat promotes adipose tissue dysfunction and abnormal fat mass physical forces, resulting in adverse metabolic, biomechanical, and psychosocial health consequences.”

The American Medical Association designated obesity a disease in 2013. As a result, the idea that obesity is caused by insufficient willpower, lack of discipline and bad choices began to transform.

This may sound complicated, but in simple terms, having problems with weight is a medical condition like high blood pressure or diabetes. It does not make a person defective or lack the willpower to eat less and exercise more. Being overweight is not merely a lifestyle choice.

Developing obesity happens like any other medical condition, including hormonal imbalances, genetic tendencies, and metabolism abnormalities.

Based on genetics and other medical factors, even a person who was a healthy weight in their younger years can still develop obesity at a later age. Having issues controlling weight should not



make a person feel bad about themselves but should prompt a discussion with their medical provider.

Treating obesity requires a trained medical professional with specific knowledge of treating weight-related diseases. Using unsupervised weight loss medications and crash diets can be more dangerous than being overweight. Looking for a board-certified medical weight loss provider ensures safe and healthy weight management.

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# Signs it could be time to move to an assisted living facility

The decision to move into an assisted living facility is complicated. There are numerous factors to consider, from challenges navigating daily life to a desire for social interaction with other seniors.

Though each individual case is unique, the following are some indicators that the time might be right to begin planning for a transition.

## Emotional challenges

Emotional challenges may indicate the time is right to move into an assisted living facility. If feelings of loneliness or depression are present, then the time might be right to make the move to an assisted living facility. Assisted living facilities can provide much-needed social interaction and companionship that seniors may not be getting at home.

## Physical challenges

Many individuals move into assisted living facilities because the physical challenges of daily life have become too significant to handle alone.

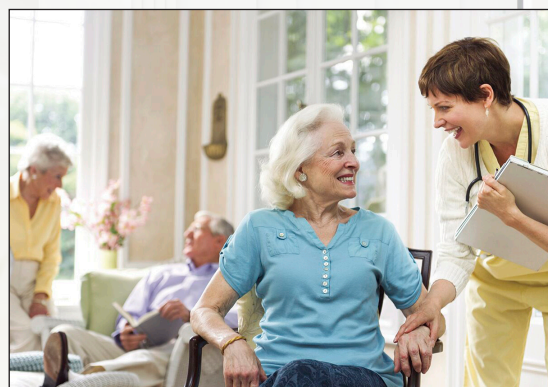
Older adults who are feeling overwhelmed by tasks such as buying groceries, cooking and cleaning may benefit from moving into assisted living facilities that handle such tasks for them.

## Hygiene issues

Staff at assisted living facilities can help adults who are struggling to bathe, dress themselves or use a restroom on their own. Family members can look for signs that a loved one's personal hygiene has taken a turn for the worse. Issues with hygiene can be a byproduct of depression, and poor hygiene also can increase risk for infection and illness.

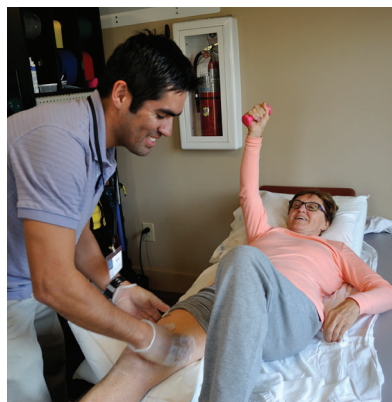
## Injuries

Falls or near-falls are another potential sign that a person can benefit from moving to an assisted living facility. Falls can hurt anyone, but they can be especially damaging to aging adults. Falls can result in loss of independence, chronic pain and reduced quality of life. Assisted living facilities are often equipped with features to reduce risk of falls, such as grab bars in showers



and bathrooms and even along corridor walls.

In addition, assisted living facilities may be housed in single-story buildings or equipped with elevators, which means residents won't be forced to navigate potentially dangerous staircases at any point during the day. Staff also can respond quickly if residents experience a fall, providing much-needed assistance that seniors living alone or with an aging spouse may not get at home.



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# Try a new hobby or rekindle an old one when joining a retirement community

The value of hobbies is undeniable, including physical activity, mental stimulation and overall enjoyment from life. The myriad benefits of hobbies is good news for seniors who have ample time for leisure activities.

When engaging in new activities, the brain adapts and restructures itself by building new and more efficient neurological pathways. Engaging in hobbies also boosts mood and serves as a stress reliever.

Retirement communities offer a plethora of programs and resources for seniors to explore new hobbies or rekindle old ones. When settling in to a retirement community, finding new hobbies or rediscovering old passions can be a great way to connect with fellow residents.

## Gardening

Gardening reaps a host of health benefits that go beyond fresh vegetables on the dinner table. Nurturing plants relieves

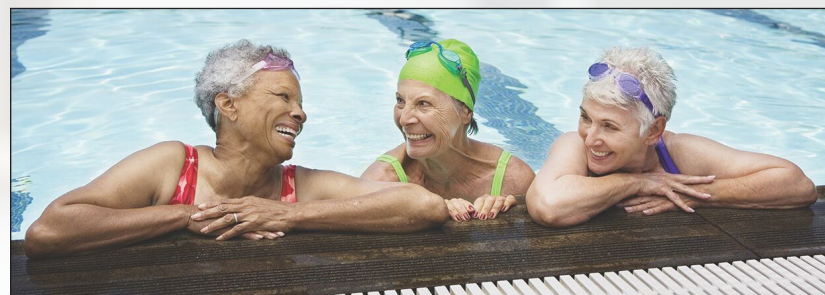
stress and has a grounding effect, bringing calm and tranquility. Gardening also provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment from seeing the fruits of your labor flourish. The physical activity of bending and reaching helps maintain joint mobility and balance, while the refreshing time outdoors provides needed vitamin D from sunlight.

## Swimming

Swimming is an ideal exercise for seniors, as it's low-impact but still a great way to utilize the entire body. Because swimming is not weight-bearing, it's easy on the joints for those who suffer from joint pain and discomfort. It's a full-body workout that keeps the pressure off your hips, knees and spine. Swimming can also help increase your flexibility in your hips, legs, arm and neck, while improving your posture.

## Art therapy

Engaging in creative activities may help



delay cognitive decline. Arts and crafts help to stimulate the senses, boost mood and provide an outlet for expression. You don't have to be a Picasso. It's not the end result of an art project but the process that matters. Art also helps seniors retain hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills.

*Ardenwoods retirement community in Buncombe County is a celebration of healthy, active living. Activities abound, including a creative arts studio and woodworking shop, lectures and classes, resident-tended gardens, indoor pool and fitness center, and many more. [ardenwoods-retire.com](http://ardenwoods-retire.com).*



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# Physical therapy as preventive medicine

By Ryan Marquart  
Smoky Mountain Sports Medicine  
& Physical Therapy

"I'm not sure I should even be here today...I'm not that bad...other people need your help more than me... Isn't physical therapy just for major injuries or after surgery?"

That is just a brief sampling of comments overheard at a typical outpatient physical therapy clinic. Yes, physical therapy is well established as the "go-to" profession following major surgeries to help aid in a speedy recovery, but there is a multitude of additional treatment options available to help manage less "serious" conditions.

Let me offer up a real-life example of a patient I have worked with over the past few months who greeted me with a similar comment.



Ryan Marquart

retired from a long career in corporate life, sitting at a desk 40 hours/week for the past 40 years. He's excited to be retired but feels like his body is broken down and has no idea where to get started with exercise. He tried going to the gym, but nagging knee and back pain flared up and got concerned he would only make it worse. In his case, there was no specific "injury" or precise location of his pain... he hurt everywhere!

Following a thorough examination, which included strength, range of motion, balance and gait analysis, we had a lengthy discussion regard-

ing his diagnosis, plan of care and rehab potential. We started with basic flexibility training and established a walking program.

He comes to the clinic 2 times per week, and we focus treatment on his biggest concerns of the day. Often, this means reviewing challenging exercises to ensure proper form at home, progressing his exercises when appropriate, and using manual therapy or modalities as needed. He has less pain with activity, is more flexible with an improved range of motion, and his balance has gotten better. We are now working together towards his long-term goal of a safe return to the local gym so he can work out regularly in group classes and with resistance training.

I suggest considering coming into physical therapy for an annual wellness check-up. Physical ther-



apists are the musculoskeletal and movement experts in the healthcare arena. You already go to the doctor, dentist, and eye doctor once a year for a check-up to avoid things getting "too bad." Why not incorporate an annual check-up with a physical therapist?

*Smoky Mountain Sports Medicine & Physical Therapy offers four locations in WNC. Set up a consultation by calling 828-550-3923 or visiting [www.smsmpt.com](http://www.smsmpt.com).*



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# Unpacking the Medicare star ratings: sizing up your plan

By Christine Gibson  
Apply4Medical2Day

During Medicare Annual Enrollment, I get asked the same question very often: "Am I in the best plan?" One way to tell how well a Medicare Advantage Plan or Medicare Prescription Drug Plan is doing is to check the Medicare Star Rating of the plan.

As an independent source, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, also known as CMS, will rate Medicare Advantage Plans and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans on an annual basis. This is a good way for consumers to compare apples to apples or oranges to oranges when they are looking at different plans available in their area. CMS uses several dozens of criteria when rating plans, including things like customer satisfaction, problem resolution, health screenings, health outcomes,

chronic care management, etc.

CMS uses a 5-star rating system, with 1 star being poor and 5 stars being excellent. If a plan should ever receive a 2-star rating, it will automatically be removed from the market and no longer be available for purchase.

The Overall Star Rating is a general indicator of how well the plan is performing. However, Medicare will provide a rating in two additional subcategories: Health Plan Services and Drug Plan Services.

For those consumers who are already enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, a year-long Special Enrollment Period, in addition to the Annual Enrollment Period, is available for them to enroll in a plan that has a 5 Star Rating from Medicare. This means that should there be a 5 Star plan available in a consumer's area, they could make a one-time



plan change to enroll in that plan at any point during the plan year.

Consumers can find the Star Ratings for plans at [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov). Whenever consumers are discussing a plan with a sales agent, they should be sure to always inquire about the Star Rating

of the plan being discussed as well.

*Christine Gibson is a State Licensed Insurance Agent based in in Waynesville who helps local residents with health and Medicare insurance questions. For more information, call 828-246-9950.*

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# Fix feet for weight loss success



Many of the estimated 70 million obese Americans are trapped in a life-threatening vicious cycle: obesity aggravates foot problems, like heel pain and flat feet. Sore feet then make it hard to exercise and lose weight — and without exercise, obesity worsens and exacerbates the progression of diabetes, heart disease and other serious health threats.

Dr. Robert Przynosch, with Smoky Mountain Foot Clinic, urges obese adults to seek immediate treatment for chronic, activity-limiting foot and

ankle problems to foster compliance with physician-directed exercise programs.

"It's unfortunate obese adults get caught up in the vicious cycle of avoiding physical activity due to foot or ankle pain, thereby permitting cardiovascular disease and other life-threatening conditions to worsen as a result," says Przynosch, DPM. "For example, in many cases, chronic heel pain occurs from carrying too much weight. Left untreated, it becomes an impediment to physical activity and meaningful weight loss."

Dr. Przynosch says there's no reason foot or ankle pain should stop obese patients from exercising. The first step toward breaking that vicious cycle is an evaluation by a foot and ankle surgeon.

Foot pain can be relieved without surgery through stretching exercises,

orthotics and athletic shoes with good shock absorption and support. If a bunion, heel pain or other condition requires surgery, patients can participate during their recovery in non-weight-bearing activities, such as riding a stationary bike, swimming or weight training.

For those moderately to severely overweight, Dr. Przynosch says a thorough physical examination is mandatory before beginning an exercise program.

"Once cleared by your physician to begin exercising, don't try to do too much too soon. Follow a gradual routine until your body adjusts to the stress of regular physical activity," he says. "For example, I counsel overweight patients to avoid working out on treadmills or elliptical machines to minimize pounding and stress on their joints."



**Dr. Robert Przynosch**

Shedding excess pounds helps diabetic patients control their disease, but Przynosch notes many who experience foot ulcerations and vascular problems caused by diabetes might think they shouldn't exercise.

*For more information or to schedule an appointment, call Smoky Mountain Foot Clinic at 828-452-4343 or visit [smokymountainfootclinic.com](http://smokymountainfootclinic.com).*



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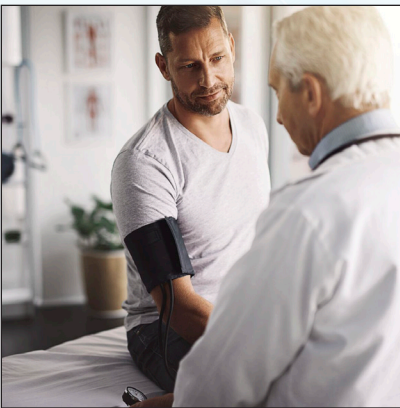
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# Exercising when you have high blood pressure

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is a serious medical condition and a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Hypertension is responsible for the majority of cardiovascular mortality. Hypertension is associated with an inactive lifestyle, so becoming more active can



prevent or even reverse a hypertension diagnosis.

Hypertension is blood pressure that is 140 or higher on the systolic (upper) number and 90 or higher on the diastolic (lower) number. Exercise can help lower high blood pressure and may provide an energy boost and relieve stress.

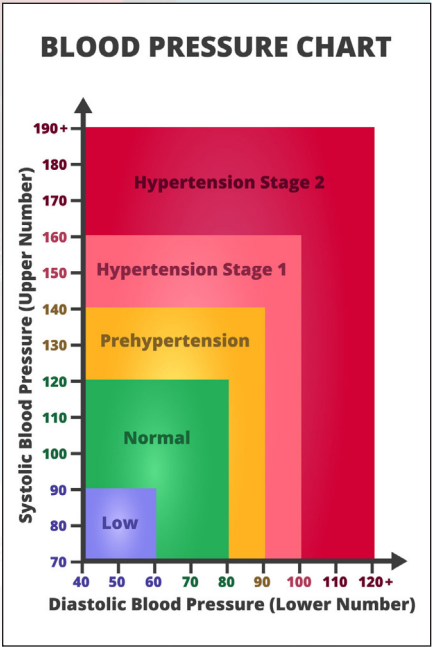
For people adopting a more active lifestyle after a hypertension diagnosis, it is preferential to start off gradually. In the event of hypertension, any activity that enables one to breathe harder and make the heart beat a little faster can be sufficient.

A gym membership may provide the motivation some need to commit to a workout regimen. Activities like swimming, jogging, brisk walking,

biking, or doing rigorous yard work also can help lower blood pressure.

For most people, 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity is recommended. This amount of exercise can be broken up any way a person desires, like 30 minutes per day, though the best results come from exercising over the course of several days each week. People should make time for stretching and muscle-strengthening as well. Regular physical activity can lower blood pressure by anywhere from five to eight mm Hg. By keeping active, a person can prevent blood pressure from creeping up again.

Exercise is a vital component of addressing hypertension. After receiving such a diagnosis,



individuals can work with their physicians to devise a safe and effective fitness regimen.

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# Seniors can backstroke their way to improved health

Exercise provides a number of measurable benefits for people of all ages, including older adults. Swimming is one exercise that may be especially beneficial for seniors.

Many people learn to swim in childhood and sharpen that skill as they get older. Though swimming devotees may get in the water for fun rather than fitness, this popular and relaxing pastime may be the ideal exercise for seniors looking to improve their overall health, particularly because it is very low-impact.

Because the water provides buoyancy while swimming, there is little risk of injury and minimal strain on the body. Water exercises, including swimming, work all the muscle groups, so it can be a complete exercise, says American Senior Communities. Swimming also is a great cardiovascular exercise that can strengthen the heart muscle and improve lung function and endurance. Because it lowers blood pressure and improves circulation, swimming is a great way to get the heart

pumping.

A gentle, 30-minute swim can burn up to 200 calories, which is more than walking. A faster swim can burn calories more quickly than running or cycling. However, since water supports up to 90 percent of the body's weight, this activity will put less stress on muscles and joints while one is exercising.

Individuals with mobility issues or arthritis pain may find that swimming helps relieve discomfort and improves range of motion. Again, because the water is doing much of the work holding up the body, it will take the stress off of joints, helping a person to feel better while stretching and moving gently in the water.

Even seniors who don't know how to swim can still reap the benefits of water exercise. Walking in shallow water, or using a kickboard to stay above the water can be effective. Using foam dumbbells or even pushing and pulling one's arms through the water can serve as a great resistance exercise that builds strength.



Swimming and additional water activities are great ways for seniors to stay in shape. As always, individuals should speak with their doctors before beginning any exercise regimen to ensure that it is safe.

*The Waynesville Recreation Center offers*

*year-round lap swimming and water aerobics. Day passes and memberships are available. Inquire at 828-456-2030 or [www.waynesvillenc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/waynesville-recreation-center](http://www.waynesvillenc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/waynesville-recreation-center).*

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# Foods that can keep cholesterol in check

Diet plays an important role in maintaining healthy cholesterol numbers. Although the level of cholesterol in a person's blood is partly due to factors related to heredity, the foods one eats also affect cholesterol levels.

When doctors discuss cholesterol with their patients, they may refer to total cholesterol, bad cholesterol and good cholesterol. What does that mean?

- **Total cholesterol:** Combined number of cholesterol in the blood should be below 200.
- **Good cholesterol:** Known as HDL, should be above 60.
- **Bad cholesterol:** Known as LDL, should be below 100.

Learning which foods might help is an important tool in managing cholesterol and triglyceride numbers.

## Oats and more

Individuals likely have heard that oatmeal is good for helping reduce cholesterol numbers. Oatmeal has soluble fiber, which lowers LDL cholesterol by reducing the absorption of cholesterol into the bloodstream. Oat bran and other high-fiber grains also are good to enjoy.

## Legumes and produce

Eggplant, okra, kidney beans, Brussels sprouts, pears, apples, and more also can be effective at lowering cholesterol levels. These foods tend to be lower in calories and saturated fats but high in soluble fiber.

## Nuts

Almond, walnuts and other foods high in omega-3 fatty acids can lower cholesterol levels by raising the levels of HDL cholesterol. Nuts like almonds also are high in vitamin E, which is an antioxidant that can keep the body healthy in a number of ways. Since nuts are high in calories, it is important to eat them in moderation.

## Fatty fish

Eating fish over other meat-based protein sources helps reduce caloric intake. It also means the body gains the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids that lower LDL and triglycerides in the bloodstream.

## Sterols and stanols

Sterols and stanols are components of plants that gum up the body's ability to absorb cholesterol from food. Companies add them to foods like margarine and granola bars as supplements. Roughly two grams of plant sterols a day can reduce LDL by 10%.

## Avocados and olives

Both of these foods are good sources of fiber and also monounsaturated fats that can help improve HDL and lower LDL levels. Substitute olive and avocado oils for lard and butter when cooking to improve cholesterol levels.



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# Try these recommendations for sinus and allergy relief

By Kim's Pharmacy

In the bustling aisles of pharmacies, a familiar scene unfolds with the changing seasons — a surge of customers seeking relief from the grip of seasonal allergies.

Pharmacists find themselves at the forefront of these inquiries, fielding countless requests for effective solutions to alleviate the sneezing, itching, and



congestion that accompany pollen-filled air. As the demand for natural remedies continues to rise, individuals are increasingly turning to pharmacists for guidance on alternative approaches that not only address the symptoms but also align with a preference for more holistic and nature-inspired solutions.

Over the counter antihistamines are the foundation of typical allergic rhinitis therapy. Traditional antihistamines interfere with the effect of histamine, caused by airborne pollen. Unfortunately the side effects of antihistamines are drowsiness, dry mouth, dizziness, blurred vision, trouble urinating, confusion in the elderly, and possible drug interactions.

So, let's talk about more effective, better tolerated options.

• **Quercetin:** Quercetin has strong antioxidant activity and supports immune health by mediating the release of inflammatory compounds including leukotrienes and prostaglandins. Quercetin is known for its ability to stabilize

mast cells, diminishing the release of histamine, a compound known to cause hypersensitivity

• **Stinging Nettle Extract:** Stinging nettle leaf is a plant that has been shown to balance immune response, specifically in the airways and nasal passages. Studies show that the extract of stinging nettle leaf balances a variety of inflammatory responses that affect respiratory health.

• **Bromelain:** Bromelain is an enzyme found on the stem and fruit of the pineapple plant. It's protein-digesting enzymes reduce circulating allergenic protein complexes associated with hyper-immune sensitivity and seasonal discomfort. It has also been found to increase the absorption of quercetin.

• **N-Acetyl Cysteine:** N-acetyl cysteine (NAC) is an amino acid precursor to one of the most important antioxidants in the body: glutathione. Both glutathione and NAC help reduce the viscosity of the mucus allowing for clearing of the airways and improved respiratory

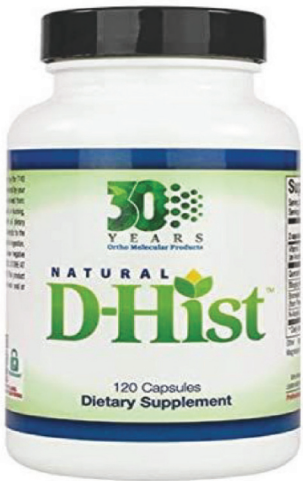
health.

• **Vitamin C:** This is an essential vitamin for the immune system and is also a potent antioxidant. When the body is under a significant amount of stress, vitamin C is excreted rapidly. Vitamin C has many immune boosting properties, but is distinctively beneficial for seasonal discomfort because of its ability to deactivate histamine.

Luckily, you don't have to get 6 separate products, D-Hist contains all in one capsule. The suggested dose is two capsules three times a day then decrease as described on the label. We haven't had anyone yet that didn't get relief with this product when taking as directed. It's so popular we ship this all across the country.

*Stop in to Kim's Pharmacy and talk to their friendly staff about our sinus and allergy recommendations. 479 Dellwood City Rd., Waynesville, or 828-452-2313.*

## Allergies Getting You Down?



Try all-natural D-Hist with five powerful ingredients that prevent allergy symptoms by clearing nasal passages and reducing the body's unwanted response to allergens.

**Quercetin:** An antioxidant that also prevents the release of histamine, which triggers most allergy symptoms

**Stinging Nettle Leaf Extract:**

Helps prevent inflammation in the sinuses and nasal passages and supports a balanced immune response

**Bromelain:** Helps destroy allergens within the body and improves absorption of Quercetin

**N-Acetyl Cysteine:** Acts as an antioxidant and helps thin out and loosen mucus

**Vitamin C:** Supports a healthy immune response and helps to deactivate histamine.

How to take: Take 2 capsules three times daily for 7 days, then take 2 capsules daily

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# When should you take your child to the ER?

## By Mission Health

Whether it's the middle of the night or the middle of the big game, any time your child becomes ill or injured, you naturally have lots of questions and concerns. One of the most common is when I should take my child to the ER?

It's always better to be safe than sorry, and you should certainly listen to your parental intuition whenever you feel something isn't right. Minor illnesses and injuries can be diagnosed and treated by an urgent care center or a primary care physician. For severe, life-threatening emergencies, seek treatment at a pediatric ER.

### Some symptoms and conditions are better suited for pediatric emergency care, including:

- Allergic reactions/breathing problems
- Broken bones
- Coughing/throwing up blood
- Deep wounds/burns/heavy bleeding
- Fainting/seizures
- High, uncontrolled fever
- Headache/dizziness/weakness/confusion
- Head injury/concussion
- Inhaled smoke/toxic fumes
- Persistent, non-specific pain, such as stomach pain or chest pain
- Persistent vomiting/diarrhea/dehydration
- Poisoning/alcohol or drug overdose

## • Suicidal thoughts

### Fever

Bring your child to the ER for a fever if they have a fever above 102° that doesn't respond to medication or lasts for more than three days, or one that consistently spikes to 103°. For infants under three months, bring them to the ER if they have a fever of 100.4°.

Often a child's temperature falls below these high fever guidelines, but as a parent, you just know something's wrong. Always listen to your intuition where your children are concerned.

An ER visit is advised if the fever is accompanied by concerning symptoms, including breathing problems, lethargy, poor feeding, severe sore throat, severe headache, stiff neck, unexplained rash, or repeated vomiting or diarrhea.

### Stomach pain

Stomach pain is among the top reasons for ER visits for both adults and children. More correctly termed abdominal pain, it has a long list of potential causes — from benign (too much candy or fried food) to life-threatening (appendicitis).

It's often hard to know when to "tough it out" and when to seek treatment. For children, especially infants and babies too young to tell you what's wrong, here are some definite signs that you should seek immediate medical care.

- Accompanied by a high fever.

- Accompanied by repeated vomiting (babies younger than three months who are vomiting or having diarrhea should be seen right away).

- Accompanied by other serious or unusual symptoms, such as difficulty breathing or change in child's behavior.

- Severe (infants and babies are inconsolable).

- Prolonged, lasting 24 or more hours.

- Localized to one particular area (e.g., the lower right quadrant could indicate appendicitis).

### Breathing

If you have a child who frequently struggles with coughs, colds, and congestion, you've probably been awakened in the middle of the night by the tearful cry of "I can't breathe!" As parents, we want to do everything we can to make our little ones feel better. But the truth is, most of the time, they really can breathe — just not comfortably through their noses.

Here's how to tell if they're truly having trouble breathing. Call 911 if your child is not getting enough air. Emergency medical technicians can start emergency breathing treatment on the way to the hospital.



**Pediatric emergency room care at Mission Hospital**

### Look for these warning signs in children:

- Breathing fast, trouble breathing (can't breathe through nose or mouth), shortness of breath or shallow breathing, not breathing at all.

- Bluish, purplish or grayish skin, especially around the lips, inside the mouth, and around the nails.

- Unresponsiveness, incoherence, confusion, agitation, and/or dizziness.

- A child whose asthma is not well controlled who is having an asthma attack.

In addition, these following symptoms could indicate asthma or a respiratory infection. Children should receive immediate medical attention if they are experiencing:

- Coughing that is intermittent, lasts more than two to three weeks and/or includes a barking sound.

- Wheezing or raspy breathing.

- Chest pain or tightness.

- Trouble sleeping and fatigue.

## Newly renovated pediatric emergency room now open at Mission Hospital



Mission Hospital unveiled a new, renovated pediatric emergency room last fall, designed with the pediatric patient and their family in mind.

"We are excited to have this new space dedicated to

children that now offers a completely private waiting area, along with other elements that are specific to the care of children," said Tiffany Vincent, Vice President of Emergency Services at Mission Hospital.

Mission Hospital has WNC's only pediatric emergency room. Patients enter through Mission Hospital's main emergency room and will then be escorted to the new dedicated Pediatric ER waiting area.

Features of the dedicated pediatric ER include:

- A completely private, pediatric-centered waiting area for children and their families.

- A new CT scanner with AI technology that allows for more precise pediatric imaging at a much lower dose, as well as quicker scanning for kids in motion.

- Medical equipment that is specifically designed for children.

- Pediatric emergency care-certified team members who are specially trained to treat younger patients and serve as a resource to the entire emergency department.

- Dedicated Child Life team who are trained professionals providing support for families, easing fears and communicating information in a way children can comprehend.

- Resuscitation room, utilized for the most critical pediatric patients.

- Neonatal Panda Warmer bed, offering the newest technology to treat neonatal patients. Located directly across from the nurse's station, allowing for close observation and monitoring of patients there.





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# Common respiratory ailments and their signs + symptoms



With so much riding on a healthy respiratory system, it can help to learn about some of the more common conditions that can affect it.

• **Asthma:** Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease caused by narrowed airways affected by inflammation. Asthma causes breathing difficulties, coughing,

wheezing, and other symptoms. Most people need to take preventive medicines to control symptoms.

• **COPD:** Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is comprised of chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Bronchitis is when the lining of the bronchial tubes become inflamed and irritated. Swelling may cause an abundance of mucus. Emphysema occurs when the tiny air sacs (alveoli) become damaged and less flexible. This reduces the alveoli's ability to move oxygen and other gases, which adversely affects breathing, according to Verywell Health.

• **Influenza:** Influenza, also known as the flu, is a viral illness that can produce a number of symptoms. The flu viruses can be inhaled or brought into the body by touching items that contain the virus. Mild fever, runny nose, cough, fatigue, and sore throat are common symptoms of influenza.

• **COVID-19:** Symptoms appear within two to 14 days of exposure to the virus. A person infected with the coro-

navirus is contagious to others for up to two days before symptoms appear, and they remain contagious to others for 10 to 20 days, depending on their immune system and the severity of their illness.

• **Tuberculosis:** TB is a contagious and potentially life-threatening infectious disease caused by the bacterium mycobacterium tuberculosis, which is spread through the air. The CDC says TB is preventable and treatable in most cases. Infection control practices can help reduce TB transmission.

• **Pneumonia:** With pneumonia, a virus, bacteria or another infectious agent causes alveoli to fill with fluid or pus, affecting breathing and gas exchange. Pneumonia symptoms may be mild and not affect daily activities or severe and require hospitalization.

• **Cystic fibrosis:** This is a genetic condition that creates very thick mucus in the body, which can cause both breathing and digestive problems. Blockages from thick mucus can trap harmful bacteria and lead to infections.



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# Positive lifestyle practices can help delay dementia

By Cindy Keehn  
Engaging Dementia

Did you know the highest risk factor for Alzheimer's Disease is simply living longer? There is no guaranteed way to prevent dementia, but current research suggests that certain lifestyle habits CAN lower the risk and potentially delay the onset.

## Regular Physical Exercise

Keep moving to maintain brain health! Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promotes the growth of new neurons, and decreases the build-up of harmful proteins. Research recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week as well as strength training activities.

## Healthy Diet

Following a balanced, nutrient-rich diet, like the Mediterranean or the DASH diet, can significantly lower the risk of dementia. Eat brain-healthy foods such as berries, dark leafy green vegetables, olive oil, nuts, lean proteins, and fatty fish like salmon and sardines. Avoid saturated fats, sugary foods, and refined carbohydrates.

## Quality Sleep

During sleep, the brain encodes memories, clears out toxins, and rejuvenates itself. Chronic sleep deprivation or poor sleep quality can increase the risk for dementia. To improve sleep quality, establish a regular sleep routine, create a calming bedtime environment, and avoid stimulants like caffeine or electronic devices before bed.

## Mental Stimulation



Challenging your brain with new tasks and activities to protect against cognitive decline. Engage in activities such as solving puzzles, reading, learning a new hobby or language, or playing a musical instrument to strengthen neural connections and promote cognitive reserve.

## Social Engagement

Spending time with friends and loved ones, participating in group activities, or joining clubs, can stimulate the brain, provide emotional support, and reduce stress levels, which also benefits brain health.

## Managing Chronic Conditions

Conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity can contribute to an increased risk of dementia. Working closely with healthcare professionals to monitor and control these conditions is essential.

*For a consultation on managing, understanding and engaging with dementia, contact Engaging Dementia by visiting [engagingdementiaeffectively.com](http://engagingdementiaeffectively.com).*



Bruce Rawlinson  
Cindy Keehn of Engaging Dementia



**Engaging  
DEMENTIA  
Effectively!**

**PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR  
BETTER OUTCOMES**

## The challenges with dementia are REAL. How can i help?

### Speaker, Educator, Staff Trainer, Family Consultant



**Cindy Keehn PT DPT CDP**

The first 30 minutes are FREE as I gain an understanding of your situation. We can then meet by phone, video or in person, with just us or with anyone who is involved. I want to help you develop practice skills and strategy to improve everyone's quality of life while on this journey!

Certified through Positive Approach to Care® as an Independent Trainer and Consultant, Cindy is Passionate to increase awareness, understanding, and skills for those with the challenges of working with someone living with dementia.

[Cindy@engagingdementiaeffectively.com](mailto:Cindy@engagingdementiaeffectively.com)  
[www.engagingdementiaeffectively.com](http://www.engagingdementiaeffectively.com)  
**828.276.3416**  
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**Engaging  
DEMENTIA  
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**PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR  
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# How caregivers can alleviate stress

Serving as a caregiver for a friend or loved one can be both rewarding and taxing at the same time. More than 50 million Americans as the primary care giver for their spouse or an older relative, and that number is expected to increase as the aging population grows in the coming decades.

Caregiving can adversely affect a caregiver's mental and physical health. The fatigue that arises from caring for another individual is often referred to as caregiver burnout. Since caregiving takes place over several years, the impact can escalate over time. One of the first steps to take is recognizing the signs of caregiver burnout so that action can be taken to improve the situation.

**Signs of caregiver stress include:**

- worrying all the time
- feeling sad or depressed
- feeling tired often
- becoming easily irked or angry
- losing interest in activities once enjoyed
- experiencing frequent headaches, pains or other health problems
- missing your own medical appointments or other appointments

Caregivers need to put themselves first at times in order to help avoid health complications that can come from the stress and demand of caregiving.

• **Ask for help:** Figure out ways that others can help out and then be sure to let them know and accept anything that is provided.



• **Do the best you can:** Every caregiver feels they are not doing enough at some point in time. Do whatever you can manage and know that it is adequate.

• **Set small goals:** Categorize responsibilities into smaller, more manageable tasks. Make lists of what is most important and tackle those goals, moving on as needed.

• **Reach out to a support group:** People who are experiencing the same highs and lows as you can offer advice or just be there to listen.

• **Find ways to rest and sleep:** Many caregivers are sleep deprived. If sleeping has become an issue, discuss potential remedies with your own doctor.

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Ad31443



# Nurturing well-being: The vital connection between dental health and overall wellness

By Dr. Caitlin Mehaffey  
Smoky Mountain Dentistry

Maintaining a radiant smile goes beyond aesthetics — it is a cornerstone of overall well-being. Getting regular dental checkups is part of empowering individuals to take control of their health journey.

Routine dental visits are instrumental in preserving oral health and preventing potential issues. During these checkups, at Smoky Mountain Dentistry, we review your medical and dental history to identify any pre-existing conditions, medications, or habits that may affect oral health. We listen to our patients, their concerns and goals, and work together to develop a comprehensive treatment plan addressing any identified issues and preventive measures for maintaining oral health.

There is a strong link between dental health and our overall health. The oral cavity is not isolated from the rest of the body, and therefore a connection exists between oral health and many systemic conditions.

- Periodontal (gum) disease has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, including coronary artery disease and stroke.
- Diabetes and periodontal disease are often related

too. Poorly controlled diabetes can lead to an increased risk of gum disease, and conversely, untreated gum disease may make it more challenging to control blood sugar levels.

- Oral bacteria and inflammation in the mouth have been associated with respiratory infections, including pneumonia. Aspiration of oral bacteria into the lungs can be a concern, particularly in individuals with compromised immune systems.
- Periodontal disease has been linked to an increased risk of preterm birth and low birth weight. Pregnant women with gum disease may be more susceptible to complications. Some studies suggest a connection between periodontal disease and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Chronic inflammation in the gums may contribute to the development or exacerbation of inflammatory joint conditions. Certain research suggests an association between poor oral health and an increased risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease.

Maintaining good dental health is more than just having a bright smile; it's a crucial aspect of overall well-being. At Smoky Mountain Dentistry, we strive to stay on the cutting edge of research and technology and love to share the advancements with our patients.

*If you are in need of a dental family, the team at Smoky Mountain Dentistry welcomes new patients. Contact Smoky Mountain Dentistry at 828-452-5807 or visit [smokymountaindentistry.com](http://smokymountaindentistry.com).*



Lauren Willett Photography  
Dr. Caitlin Mehaffey, Smoky Mountain Dentistry



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# Five ways to make your fitness routine more fun and engaging

Despite the best and most genuine intentions, many New Year's resolutions to get in shape fall by the wayside before January has come and gone.

Many people stop heading to the gym because their exercise routines become stale. By making fitness more engaging and fun, individuals may be more likely to stick with a new regimen.

## Exercise with a friend

It can be tough to get motivated to exercise. However, when you have a buddy invested in the same activities, you can inspire one another to stick with the routine. A little healthy competition also can keep both of you focused.

## Take a class

Taking an exercise class has a similar benefit. Everyone gets to know each other by name. The instructor and others in the class will come to expect



you — and may even give you a friendly nudge if you skip! There are many classes to choose from, including aerobics, pilates, zumba, spin cycle and more.

## Try something new

Change your routine every so often.

This will force your brain and body to adapt and work a little harder and provide new inspiration for doing the workout. While you don't have to engage in a trendy workout if you don't want to, settle for trying one new class or machine a week to figure out what you may enjoy.

## Vary your schedule

Think about scheduling different types of activities for particular days of the week. For example, Monday may be for the elliptical and rowing machine, Tuesday for swimming and exercise bike, Wednesday for the treadmill and free weights. This can make exercise more engaging.

## Use an exercise playlist

Download several upbeat songs that can get you energized for exercise. There even are specially curated playlists that match the songs' beats per minute with exercise cadence, to help you run or workout at a desired pace.

Exercising can be fun and more immersive when people explore and experiment the many ways to get fit.

*The YMCA has seven gym and recreation locations that offer fun and engaging exercise environment. Visit [ymcawnc.org/locations](https://ymcawnc.org/locations).*



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# The snowball effect of spinal and neck misalignment

By Dr. Michael Hogan  
Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center

A long time ago, having a pronounced dorsal curvature, or a bump on your back, was considered something that happened to elderly people. However, more often now in our clinic, we see bumps on people's spine developing at an earlier age.

There's another troubling trend appearing at an earlier age. Evidence on x-rays shows calcium build more often in younger people than before. Some call the calcium build ups "horns." However, they are not horns.

Calcification is the body's normal response to abnormal stress on the body. You may see calcium build-up, or bumps, on areas of the body that have been previously injured. Swelling is also a common response to injury.


Injuries often need attention from a professional to support the natural healing process. If a joint stays

out of alignment, muscles may stay strained, and potentially become tendonitis.

Tendonitis takes longer to get better, because there is more inflammation. Inflammation is the body's normal healing response.

However, if the joint stays out of alignment, the inflammation does not go away. This leads to anatomical, biochemical, and possibly neurologic symptoms.

Ongoing neck misalignment causes headaches, irritability, indigestion, tiredness and pain.

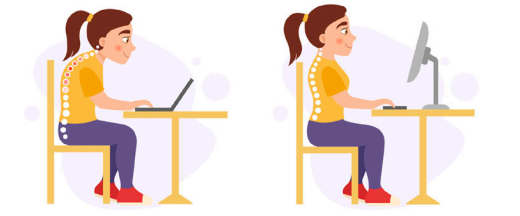


**Do yourself a favor:** take time to take care of your mind, body and nutrition daily to keep in alignment. Avoid cracking your own neck and back, and do stretching or yoga instead.

Learn how to strengthen your muscles, stay hydrated, and think good thoughts. Yes, your thoughts affect your emotions and alignment.

Stay positive and keep your head up!

*For more information about how proper alignment can make a difference in your quality of life, contact Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center in Waynesville at 828-246-9555 or [www.bluemtnchiro.com](http://www.bluemtnchiro.com).*



**✗ WRONG SITTING POSTURE**  
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**✓ CORRECT SITTING POSTURE**  
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## Neck posture has a profound effect on mood and brain function

By Dr. Tara Hogan  
Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center

The design and shape of the human spine is unique compared to animals.

An infant spine begins in a curled up C shape, but once a baby learns to crawl the neck begins to extend. This motion will begin the important and impactful S-curve we have as older children and adults.

The S-curve in the spine promotes our upright posture and drives brain function — specifically, the prefrontal cortex of our brain.

The cortex part of our brain is essentially what differentiates us as human. It allows for higher capacity to think logically, create relationships, regulate emotions, and have impulse control.

Neck extension moves us from using mainly our brain's temporal lobe (think "temper tantrums" of a toddler) to using more of the cortex, which is a higher brain center.

This may be why the epidemic of "text neck" or neck forward posture is causing so many issues for people.

Scientists have also found that the "chin up" posture causes a better mood and more confidence.

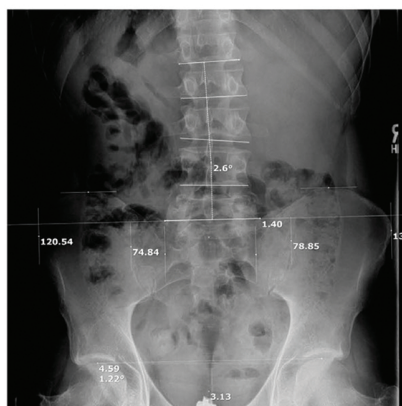
A sore neck relieved by a chiropractic adjustment can do more than ease pain — it could result in a better mood and more logical thinking! This is something many of our patients have reported to us after having consistent chiropractic care.





# Find the cause of your pain.

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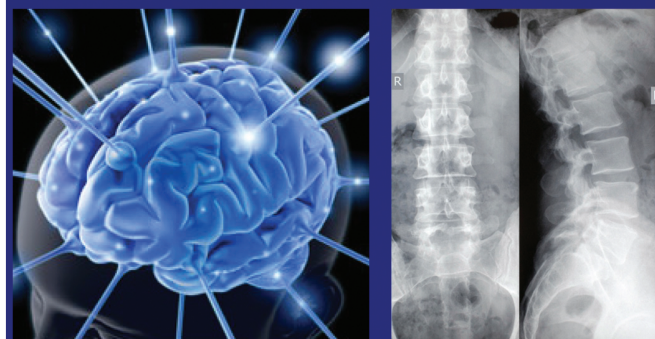


Is a high hip causing your low back pain?



Or a head tilt causing your neck pain?

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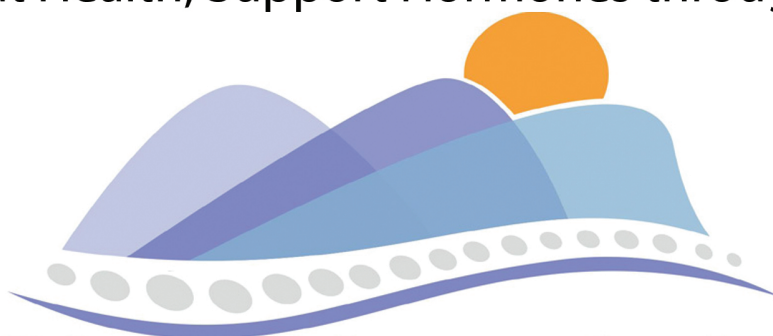
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