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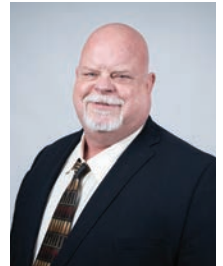
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5 ways to guard against orthopedic injuries this summer

Summer is the season of movement — longer days, warmer weather and a calendar packed with outdoor fun. Whether you're hiking, golfing, swimming, gardening or chasing the kids around the yard, it's the perfect time to stay active.

But with all that activity comes a spike in orthopedic injuries, especially those affecting the bones, joints, muscles and spine.

At Southeastern Orthopedics & Spine, our team of orthopedic surgeons and sports medicine specialists sees a noticeable uptick in injuries during the summer months — many of them preventable. Before you dive headfirst into your next summer adventure, check out these five tips to help you stay safe, strong and injury-free.

Warm Up Before You Work Out

Too often, people jump straight into physical activity without properly preparing their muscles and joints. Spending just 5-10 minutes warming up with light cardio and dynamic stretching helps increase circulation, boost flexibility and prepare your body for movement.

It's especially important if you're returning to activity after a sedentary winter or trying a new sport. A proper warm-up can reduce the risk of muscle strains, ligament sprains and joint injuries.

Be Mindful of Overuse

Summer can inspire people to go all-in, particularly with repetitive activities like running, cycling or tennis.

But doing too much too quickly is one of the fastest routes to overuse injuries like tendinitis, stress fractures



and joint inflammation. The key? Progress gradually. If you're increasing your mileage or workout intensity, follow the 10 percent rule: Don't increase your activity more than 10 percent per week, and always listen to your body — pain is a warning sign, not a badge of honor.

Protect Your Spine While Gardening or Lifting

Back injuries don't just happen on the playing field. Yard work, gardening and DIY projects can take a toll on your spine if you're not careful.

We commonly see herniated discs, strained muscles and sciatica triggered by improper lifting or extended bending.

Here's how to guard your back: When lifting, bend at the knees — not the waist — and engage your core. Keep the object close to your body and avoid twisting.

If a task takes more than 30 minutes, take breaks and switch positions frequently.

Gear Up for Safety

From the right footwear to protective equipment, having the proper gear is essential for injury prevention.

Shoes should provide adequate support for the activity — running shoes aren't meant for court sports, and flip-flops definitely don't belong on a hike.

Helmets and pads can also make a big difference, especially for activities like biking, skateboarding or contact sports.

And don't forget hydration — dehydration can lead to muscle cramps, decreased coordination and even heat-related illnesses, which can increase the risk of falls and sprains.

Don't Brush Off a Small Injury

It's easy to dismiss a sore ankle or aching shoulder, but minor orthopedic injuries can evolve into bigger problems if left untreated. A nagging pain that doesn't improve after a few days of rest may need a professional evaluation.

Early diagnosis and treatment can often prevent a minor issue from becoming a major one.

Southeastern Orthopedics & Spine specializes in diagnosing and treating a full range of orthopedic and spine conditions. Whether you're trying to get back on the field or simply want to enjoy your summer without discomfort, we're here to help you move better and live healthier. Five clinical locations include South Asheville and Clyde.

Call (828) 274-7367 or (833) 747-7367 to learn more and schedule your appointment.

The potential health benefits of pickleball

Anyone who lives near a pickleball court can no doubt attest to the popularity of the sport. The sport has reinvigorated millions of players' enthusiasm for physical activity and team sports.

The sport brings a thrill of competition and the joy of social interaction, but those are not the only benefits to participating in this fast-growing sport.

Pickleball also provides a fun way to embrace physical activity. Though car-

diovascular exercise and strength training are vital components of successful exercise regimens, it's important that individuals make their fitness routines enjoyable to increase the likelihood that they will remain committed to less sedentary lifestyles.

The sport has earned a reputation as an inclusive, community-building activity, which can contribute to long-term health benefits. By engaging in social activities like pickleball, individuals can reduce their risk for loneliness, which

can improve their overall quality of life and may lower their chances of developing potentially deadly health problems.

Playing pickleball helps players get their heart rates up to a healthy level. Ample time with moderately elevated heart rates has been found to improve cardiac fitness.

It is also one of various activities that also can improve memory and recall over time. The physical benefits of



pickleball may not be lost on players, but some may be surprised to learn the sport offers cognitive health benefits as well as improvements in personal well-being, life satisfaction and happiness.

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The sweet truth about fruit and sugar

Fresh fruit is a delicious treat that can be enjoyed any time of year, but consumption seems to heat up as the mercury rises. Cherries, melons, plums, nectarines, and blueberries are just some of the tasty fruits that are typically enjoyed during warm months. But for those who are trying to eat healthy, they may wonder if fruit — which tends to be high in sugar — aligns with their diet and exercise plans.

People long have been advised to monitor their sugar consumption — too much sugar intake can result in elevated blood pressure, inflammation, weight gain, diabetes, and fatty liver disease.

Yet fruits are listed on the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans, with experts saying adults should aim for 1.5 to two cups of fruit per day, or about two servings. That's because not all sugar is created equal.

Fruit contains naturally occurring sugar (fructose) rather than the added sugar that is in many foods, baked goods and candy. The



body processes natural sugars differently than it would sugar in cookies and cakes. Fructose is only harmful in large amounts, so for most people, the amount of sugar in fruit is safe to eat.

Fruits tend to be loaded with fiber and water, which can help a person feel fuller, longer. And the high fiber content means fruits take longer to digest and the fructose will be processed by the liver slowly, preventing sugar spikes that added sugar can cause.

That isn't to say that all forms of fruit are the same. Whole fruit offers the most benefits through fiber and protective nutrients, including antioxidants. Fruit juice is a more concentrated source of fructose that doesn't have the fiber to moderate sugar absorption. Excessive fruit juice intake can cause fat deposition in the liver, obesity, and insulin resistance.

Those who want to avoid fruits with the highest sugar concentration should skip mangoes and apples, which have 46 and 25.1 grams of sugar in one piece of fruit, respectively. However, unless a person has diabetes or another health condition where blood sugar levels need to be monitored, individuals shouldn't fret about the fruit in sugar.

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How to keep indoor air clean during allergy season

Seasonal allergies can turn a warm and welcoming summer or fall day into something else entirely. Congestion, runny nose, sneezing, and itchy eyes are just some of the unpleasant symptoms of seasonal allergies, which are most often triggered by high pollen counts during spring and summer.

Fortunately, steps can be taken to keep indoor air clean during allergy season.



- **Close windows and doors:** Opening windows and doors on warm days allows outdoor allergens like pollen to get inside. Pollen can attach to furniture and clothing, and that can make time indoors unpleasant for allergy sufferers. Maintain indoor air quality by closing windows and doors on windy days and/or days when pollen counts are high.

- **Employ air cleaning devices:** Air cleaners with asthma & allergy filters can filter nearly 98 percent of allergen particles in the air.

- **Keep a clean home:** In most homes, items such as bedding, upholstered furniture and carpeting provide an ideal environment for dust mites, which are microscopic bugs that trigger allergic reactions in many people. Washing bedding and uncovered pillows in hot water each week also can help to control dust mites and improve indoor air quality.

- **Vacuum frequently:** Frequent vacuuming is another way to improve indoor air quality.



- **Prevent mold and treat areas where infestations have occurred:** Mold also contributes to poor indoor air quality. Dehumidifiers can be used to reduce mold and dust mites, making these beneficial additions to allergy sufferers' homes. Minimizing house plants around the house and addressing leaky fixtures immediately are some additional measures to prevent mold infestations.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light pink shirt and a wide-brimmed straw hat, is holding a large dandelion seed head in front of her face. The background is a blurred green field.

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Recover from soft tissue injuries



Injuries can affect someone when playing sports, exercising or engaging in less strenuous activities of daily life. Soft-tissue injuries are common and include those that affect the skin, tendons, muscles, and ligaments.

Types of soft-tissue injuries

Soft-tissue injuries may result from an acute trauma or through repetitive use. The following are some of the most common types:

- **Skin injuries:** Lacerations are cuts that open to tissue below the surface of the skin. Abrasions only affect the outermost layers of skin, and like burns, can be first-, second- or third-degree injuries. Contusions are bruises that cause pain, swelling and discoloration due to bleeding into the tissue below the skin.
- **Sprains:** A sprain is a stretch or tear of a ligament. Ligaments help stabilize and support the joints, meaning knees, ankles and wrists are most susceptible to sprains.
- **Strains:** A strain is an injury to a muscle or tendon often caused by overuse, stretching or force.
- **Tendinitis and bursitis:** Tendinitis is irritation or inflammation of a tendon. It results from many small stresses that repeatedly

aggravate the tendon. Bursitis is a condition marked by inflammation of small, jelly-like sacs that are located throughout the body to help reduce friction between bones and soft tissues.

Treatment for soft-tissue injuries

Usually, soft-tissue injuries are not serious and recovery may not take long. One of the first treatment methods that doctors suggest is the RICE protocol: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation.

Injuries to the skin, particularly those that expose tissue beneath it, may require more extensive treatment, including sutures or bandaging.

In the event that RICE doesn't solve the problem, an orthopedic professional may need to perform surgery or recommend a different treatment. Physical therapy and instruction on stretching to prevent future injuries may be warranted.

SEPT Physical Therapy treats a wide range of conditions—from orthopedic injuries and chronic pain to balance issues and post-surgical rehab. No matter your age or activity level, SEPT can help you feel your best. Take the first step toward a healthier future—schedule your appointment today.

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How does your garden grow?

By Ardenwoods Retirement Community

Most days you'll find Pat Jollie tending her garden, a pastime she's enjoyed since her youth, and this time of year is no exception. Summer is the perfect time to dig into the world of gardening for the fun, health benefits or just the pure enjoyment gardening provides.

"It's so nice to be out in the garden here. I tend to my flowers, sit back, enjoy them, and socialize. Folks are always checking out their garden — I have such pleasant neighbors," said Jollie, a resident of Ardenwoods Retirement Community for the past 8 years.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, gardens offer an easy and flexible way to develop your green thumb while staying active.

Raised beds are a fantastic option for would-be gardeners who may not have large plots for planting. Raised beds also make tending to plants easier on your back. Looking to building your own raised bed garden, here are some tips you may find helpful:



- **The right location** — Ensure your raised bed gets six to eight hours of sunlight each day.
- **Durable materials** — Use rot-resistant wood like cedar or recycled composite materials to build the bed.
- **Proper spacing** — If you have multiple beds, leave enough space between them for easy access and maintenance.

Container and indoor gardening are ideal for those with limited outdoor space or who want to add a touch of greenery to indoor spaces. Here's how to make the most of container gardening:

- **The right containers** — Ensure your containers have adequate drainage and are large enough to accommodate plants as they grow.
- **Soil matters** — Use high-quality potting mix to provide your plants with the nutrients they need.
- **Good neighbors** — All the plants in one pot should require the same amount of light and moisture. Combining plants with different needs is not recommended.
- **Lighting** — Choose a spot that receives plenty of sunlight or supplement sunlight with artificial grow lights.
- **Water wisely** — Overwatering is a common mistake in indoor gardening. Water only when the top inch of soil is dry.

Gardening can be a fun, healthful activity, and one that can be adapted to almost any available space.



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to her that she was,
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Activities that exercise the brain

Mental health is vital for all people, including the aging population. An estimated 57 million people had dementia worldwide in 2021 and the disease is increasing in prevalence in individuals under the age of 70.

Although many factors are involved in the development of dementias and cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease or other neurodegenerative illnesses are not inevitable as one gets older. But people of all ages can benefit from incorporating activities that exercise the brain into their daily lives.

- **Learn a new language:** Speaking a new language opens up new opportunities for travel and socialization and also strengthens the brain. Bilingualism increases and strengthens the connectivity between different areas of the brain. This enhanced connectivity might play a role in delaying the onset of dementias, according to researchers.

- **Learn new skills:** Trying something new might stimulate the brain in ways that improve



its function. A cognitively demanding skill, such as photography, playing an instrument and other activities could enhance memory function. Teaching such skills to others also can reinforce brain functions.

- **Take dancing classes:** Dancing can help combat Alzheimer's disease by improving blood circulation throughout the body. It also forces a person's memory and processing speed to work at a higher capacity through learning the choreography.

- **Use all of your senses:** Activities that simultaneously engage each of the five senses can strengthen the brain. Baking a batch of cookies is an example of a multisensory experience that can improve memory and recall.

- **Work on puzzles:** Crossword puzzles, word searches, word games, and brain teaser-like puzzles are entertaining and work the brain. Research has shown that even doing jigsaw puzzles recruits multiple cognitive abilities and is a protective factor for visuospatial cognitive aging.

- **Socialize with others:** Socializing with other people can stimulate attention and memory. This helps to strengthen neural networks in the brain that makes the brain work harder. Socialization is also beneficial for mental health, especially among older adults who tend to be more isolated.

People are often concerned with giving their bodies a workout, but they also should focus on activities that strengthen their brains.

Questions about Care at Home?

Aging in Place With a Chronic Illness

Tuesday, August 19

Haywood Senior Resource Center | 1:00p.m.

If you are living with a chronic illness, what are your options for care as things change? Join representatives from Haywood Home Health and Hospice as they discuss next steps and resources available for care at home.

Memory Care Resources for Caregivers

Tuesday, September 9

Canton Public Library | 1:00p.m.

Are you caring for a loved one with Dementia? Join us as we discuss available resources includes representatives from MemoryCare, Maple Leaf Adult Day Care, Home Care Services of Haywood, and Haywood Hospice.

For more information or to register, call 452-5039

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— Leigh Ann Mertens, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator

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- Standing for extended periods, forget it.
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Rolfing and pain relief

How structural integration can alleviate chronic pain

By Vanessa Sychak
South Slope Acupuncture

Chronic pain affects millions worldwide, often prompting individuals to explore alternatives to conventional treatments. Among the options gaining attention is Rolfing, a bodywork technique designed to realign the body's structure, promote balance, and reduce pain.

While Rolfing is often associated with deep tissue work, modern practitioners are increasingly incorporating gentler methods like Craniosacral therapy into their practice, offering a holistic approach that's effective and adaptable to the needs of each individual.

What is Rolfing?

Rolfing, or Rolfing Structural Integration, was developed by Dr. Ida Rolf in the 1940s. The technique realigns the body by manipulating the fascia, the connective tissue surrounding muscles, bones, and organs.

Rolfing aims to bring the body into better alignment with gravity, relieving stress on muscles and joints. Traditionally, Rolfing is associated with deep and sometimes intense tissue manipulation, but techniques such as Craniosacral therapy offer gentler forms of Rolfing for those who may be sensitive to deep pressure.

How Rolfing Relieves Pain

• **Addressing Fascial Restrictions:** Rolfing releases restrictions in the fascia, which can become tight or stuck due to repetitive movement, injury, or trauma. Rolfing practitioners stretch and loosen the fascia through hands-on techniques, improving flexibility and reducing pain. This can be particularly effective

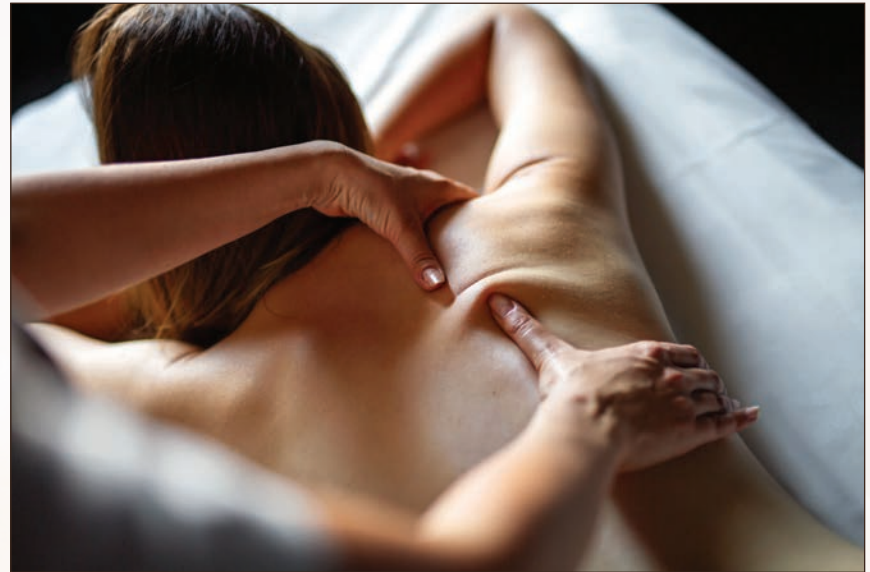
for back pain, shoulder tension, or postural imbalances.

• **Incorporating Craniosacral Therapy:** Craniosacral therapy allows for a gentle, more nuanced approach to pain relief. Craniosacral therapy focuses on the body's cranial rhythm—the subtle movement of cerebrospinal fluid through the spine and skull. Practitioners use light touch to monitor and balance this rhythm, relieving head, spine, and sacrum tension. This can help release fascial restrictions at a deeper level without intense pressure, making it suitable for individuals with a lower tolerance for deep tissue work, those recovering from injury, or people with sensitive nervous systems. For those with conditions like migraines, chronic fatigue, or fibromyalgia, Craniosacral therapy's subtle approach can provide significant pain relief without overwhelming the body.

• **Improving Posture and Structural Alignment:** Misaligned bodies put undue strain on specific muscles and joints, contributing to chronic pain. By realigning the body, Rolfing helps distribute weight and tension more evenly across the body's structure, reducing the overuse of certain areas. Over time, this can lead to pain relief in the back, neck, and other joints.

• **Enhancing Mobility and Flexibility:** Rolfing helps improve mobility by breaking up fascial adhesions that limit flexibility. As the fascia becomes more flexible, and the body is freed from unnecessary restrictions, many individuals experience less stiffness, an increased range of motion, and a reduction in pain.

• **Releasing Emotional and Physical Tension:** Emotional stress can



manifest as tension in the body, leading to discomfort and even pain, particularly in the neck, shoulders, and lower back. Rolfing aims to release stored physical tension in the fascia. Craniosacral work is especially effective for releasing emotional trauma that may be stored in the body's tissues. This not only alleviates pain but also fosters a sense of emotional well-being, making Rolfing an integrative approach to both mental and physical health.

Conditions Rolfing Can Help Alleviate

• **Chronic back pain:** Fascial release and postural correction ease back pain by addressing structural misalignments.

• **Neck and shoulder pain:** Gentle manipulations can relieve tension that builds up from stress or poor posture, reducing discomfort in the upper body.

• **Migraines and headaches:** Craniosacral therapy specifically targets the head and neck to reduce the frequency and severity of headaches.

• **Joint pain and arthritis:** Rolfing's realignment techniques can reduce strain on joints, easing pain associated with arthritis.

• **Fibromyalgia:** The gentle approach of Craniosacral therapy is well-suited for those with fibromyalgia, offering relief without triggering flare-ups.

What to Expect from a Rolfing Session

Over a 60-90 minute session, the practitioner assesses your posture, movement patterns, and areas of tension before applying hands-on techniques to manipulate the fascia. When Craniosacral therapy is incorporated, the session will involve light touch to help balance the body's cranial rhythm. Most clients experience an immediate sense of relief and increased ease of movement following a session.

For those seeking a personalized and holistic approach to pain management, Rolfing—with its capacity to adapt to individual needs—offers an effective path to physical and emotional healing. Book an appointment at South Slope Acupuncture today.

A senior's guide to exercising safely

Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle for people of any age, including the over-50 crowd. While physical activity undoubtedly beneficial for seniors, it's important for older adults to exercise caution when starting a workout regimen.

Seniors can suffer overuse injuries, torn ligaments or cartilage, broken bones, and other physical problems if they do not embrace safe exercising strategies. Most injuries can be avoided when following these healthy habits and guidelines.

- **Find an activity you like.** Engaging in regular exercise helps you maintain a higher level of fitness compared to those who are sedentary. Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy so it's easy to make a regular habit.



- **Start slowly and then increase gradually.** People hear "exercise" and they may think that translates to hours at the gym and high-intensity workouts. But exercising does not have to take as much time or be as intense as one might think. General guidelines state older adults need about 2.5 hours of aerobic activity per week, not each day.

- **Warm up before activity.** It's important to get the body acclimated to exercise before each workout. Walking in place, doing arm circles and engaging in some gentle squats or lunges can prepare the body for what is to come. Stretch afterwards when ligaments and tendons are warmed up.

- **Remember to stay hydrated.** Older adults are at greater risk for dehydration because they naturally have less water in their bodies or take medications that increase risk of dehydration. Drinking enough water during exercise is key.

- **Know your limits and adapt.** A workout that is fine for a 30-year-old may not be the same for someone who is 60. You might need to embrace walking instead of running, or even swap lifting weights with using resistance bands or doing body weight exercises.

- **Focus on some balance activities.** Balance issues can cause seniors to fall and risk serious injury. Working on your balance may help to lower your risk of these types of injuries, and can be as simple as standing on one foot or marching in place.



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What seniors can do to maintain a healthy weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is a lifelong process.

The basal metabolic rate indicates the rate at which the body uses energy while at rest. As that rate slows down, body weight can increase. But seniors should know they aren't helpless against nature and Father Time. In fact, there is much aging adults can do to maintain a healthy weight throughout their golden years.

- **Limit portion sizes when eating.**

Controlling portion sizes is easier said than done, particularly for seniors who dine out with frequency. When dining out, seniors can order off the appetizer menu instead of ordering an entrée. At home, pay attention to serving size data on product labeling. If necessary, measure portions when eating foods such as cereal so the portion you eat reflects the serving size noted on the box.

- **Eat breakfast each morning.**

Seniors who skip breakfast could be doing their waistlines a notable disservice. Several large, long-term, prospective, observational studies have found an association between breakfast consumption and lower risk of obesity. The less structured pattern of retirement living may compel some seniors to skip breakfast, but committing to a morning meal can help keep off extra pounds.

- **Commit to routine exercise.**

Diet can go a long way toward helping seniors maintain a healthy weight. However, diet is not the only area where seniors can help their waistlines. Routine physical activity can help seniors maintain muscle mass and make it easier to be more mobile. Staying mobile can help keep pounds off, as a sedentary lifestyle is one of the more notable risk factors for overweight and obesity.



- **Make a concerted effort to remain hydrated throughout the day.**

Age-related body composition changes make seniors particularly vulnerable to dehydration. An aging body does not demand water like it once did, so it's easy for seniors to forget to hydrate

because they don't feel thirsty. But remaining hydrated is important for seniors looking to maintain a healthy weight because dehydration can mimic symptoms of hunger.



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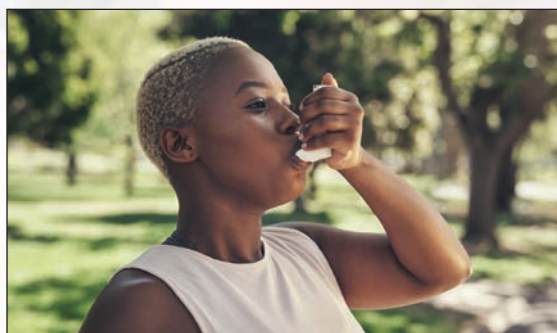
Yes, you can enjoy the outdoors after an asthma diagnosis

Summer is one of the best times to be outside enjoying fresh air and the bevy of activities available. But about 25 million Americans live with asthma, which may make outdoor activities more difficult.

Asthma is a medical condition that causes airways to swell and tighten, making breathing difficult when enjoying the outdoors or exercising outside. But people with asthma don't have to hibernate in their homes — even if they have a severe form of the condition.

Here are some pointers for enjoying the outdoors after an asthma diagnosis:

- **Know your triggers.** Identifying trigger factors like smoke, air pollution, strong odors, pollen, and even dramatic shifts in weather can help you



mitigate the risk.

- **Take it slow.** Sudden shifts in air temperature can trigger an asthma attack — even leaving an air conditioned home and going outside in the summer. Always take it slow when planning to exercise outdoors, gradually acclimating the body

and lungs.

- **Take medication as directed.** It's important for those with asthma to take medication as prescribed to reduce the severity of reactions to triggers. In addition, one should keep a rescue inhaler nearby at all times, especially during allergy season.

- **Check pollen counts.** Use reliable sources to check pollen and other allergen levels, and reconsider spending a lot of time outdoors until counts are lower. Wearing a face covering also may help.

- **Bring a buddy along.** Having someone available to call for help should an asthma attack occur is essential. An asthma action plan can help others know what to do and who to call in the event of an emergency.

How to protect your hearing over the long haul

Hearing loss is often seen as an inevitable part of aging. One in two people over the age of 85 has hearing loss.

Age-related hearing loss is known as presbycusis. Presbycusis can develop due to a combination of variables, including changes to blood flow and the structures of the inner ear as the body ages and shifts in how the brain processes speech and sounds. Certain medications and medical issues, including diabetes and poor circulation, also can exacerbate age-related hearing loss.

Though some hearing loss as individuals grow older may be related to age, Father Time cannot bear all the blame when individuals begin to lose their hearing.

Roughly 5 percent of adults between the ages of 45 and 54 have disabling hearing loss. These losses are more likely caused by individual behaviors than general aging.

Preventive health care is vital to protecting the body and hearing long-term. The following are some simple ways individuals can protect their hearing in the years to come.

- **Keep the volume down.** Listen to personal audio devices at 50 to 60 percent of maximum audio level. Some smartphones are pre-programmed to alert users when they attempt to exceed these levels, and users are urged to heed these warnings



when adjusting the volume on their devices.

- **Lower the volume the longer you listen.** Prolonged listening at high volumes can be especially harmful to hearing, even if users are listening at 50 to 60 percent of the maximum audio level. If you intend to listen for a long period of time, lower the volume even further.

- **Take listening breaks.** Individuals who listen to personal devices throughout a workday are urged to take routine breaks at least once every hour.

- **Wear over-the-ear headphones.** Choose over-the-ear, noise-cancelling headphones over earbuds. Over-the-ear headphones are more effective at creating a seal that blocks out ambient sounds, which means users are less likely to turn up

the volume on their headphones than they might be when using earbuds.

Routine hearing examinations are an effective way to monitor hearing, and individuals are urged to make them part of their preventive health care regimen.

Did you know?

Hearing aids can be a useful ally for individuals as they navigate and seek to overcome hearing loss. Older individuals affected by age-related hearing loss may be particularly in need of hearing aids, but data indicates usage of the devices is low among the aging population.

Just three in 10 adults over 70 with hearing loss have ever used hearing aids.

And it's not only the aging population that is reluctant to use hearing aids, as the NIDCD notes that just 16 percent of adults between the ages of 20 and 69 who could benefit from wearing hearing aids have ever used them. Greater education regarding the efficacy of hearing aids and the range of user-friendly aids that are nothing like the bulky, often ill-fitting products of yesteryear could compel more individuals with hearing loss to turn to these devices in the years to come.



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Posture Is Everything

By Dr. Michael Hogan, DC

Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center

Your body, mind, and chemistry — how aligned are you?

Posture is everything — mental posture, physical posture, even chemical posture. The way you hold yourself in the world reflects the way you move through life.

But here's a question: are your switches set to automatic? Are your daily health choices intentional? Or are you still relying on willpower to steer the ship?

Willpower is admirable, but it fades. Without a plan, most of us eventually fall short of our goals, end up on medication, or face surgeries that could've been prevented.

Life isn't meant to revolve around health routines. But you do need a system that supports your well-being consistently and sustainably.

Your Walk Tells a Story

In chiropractic practice, we see everything from sciatica to neck pain. These issues, left unchecked, begin to affect what's called your ambulatory profile — the natural way you walk and move.

Here's the reality: how you walk can predict how long and how well you'll live. It affects both lifespan (years lived) and healthspan (years lived well).

A stiff spine slows you down. Compression in your neck can weaken nerve signals to your arms, reducing grip strength— another vital health indicator. Poor posture isn't just a cosmetic issue; it's a functional one.

Balance, too, is critical. Your body relies on three systems to keep you upright:

- Your vision
- Your inner ear
- The receptors in your upper neck.

When these systems are out of sync, posture and coordination falter.

Alignment Isn't Just Physical

Chiropractic care, posture exercises, and nutritional support help realign your structure — but true wellness also depends on your chemical and emotional alignment.

Are your mineral levels where they should be? Are

you eating foods that support antioxidant function, nerve health, and muscle performance? Are you breathing properly? Hydrated?

And what about your emotional state — your inner alignment?

There is a powerful link between mental, emotional, and spiritual posture and how we carry ourselves through the world. Your internal alignment shapes your external presence, your confidence, your energy, and even your influence on others.

When clients begin aligning all three — body, chemistry, and mind — they gain remarkable momentum toward better health.

What's Your Stance?

Most of us carry a health philosophy, whether we realize it or not. The question is — did you choose yours, or inherit it?

We all have genetic weaknesses. Maybe yours is cardiovascular. Maybe it's digestive. Maybe it's neuromuscular. But your posture toward these predispositions makes all the difference. Do you seek proactive support — or wait until symptoms scream?

Sometimes healing requires a blend of approaches: herbs, chiropractic, acupuncture, and yes — sometimes medications. The goal is alignment, not perfection.

The Small Things Matter

Here's a simple example: holding your ear directly over your shoulder isn't just about looking good — it dramatically reduces spinal strain. Just one inch of forward head posture can add 10 to 40 pounds of pressure on your neck. Multiply that by 10,000 steps a day, and the wear adds up.

Poor posture contributes to disc degeneration, vertigo, shoulder problems, and falls. These are avoidable with small, consistent corrections.

Years ago, posture was seen as a health marker. Today, with chronic device use and desk jobs, we're in a postural crisis. But the solution isn't complicated—it's awareness, action, and respect for your body's natural intelligence.

Chemistry and Mindset

On a biochemical level, your body thrives in an



Dr. Michael Hogan of Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center of Waynesville helps patients feel their best, focusing on spinal alignment as a key to whole body wellness.

alkaline state. Anyone who's cared for a fish tank or swimming pool knows balance is everything. Alkalinity supports energy, recovery, and resistance to disease — and it's built through nutrition, breathwork, and hydration.

Mentally and emotionally, posture is perhaps even more powerful. When you align your mindset with confidence and faith, you step into a place where health is no longer a battle—it's a result of who you are and how you live. You trust your choices, learn from mistakes, and guide yourself and others to think well, feel well, and live well.

So — What's Your Posture?

How do you move through the world? Are you aligned with your best self—or are you waiting for the pain to get worse before you take action?

Your posture is more than your pose. It's your philosophy, your rhythm, your strategy for a long, vibrant life.

So ask yourself today: What's your posture toward your health?

Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center offers x-ray-specific and data-driven spinal adjustments, joint alignment and detailed, personalized nutrition consultations. Services include sports injuries and recovery; pain and ailments; mobility; and family care (pregnancy, pediatric, infant and breastfeeding concerns). Insurance and Medicare coverage accepted. Visit Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center in Waynesville or contact 828-246-9555 to schedule a consultation.

How to make mental health matter

More than one in five adults in the United States lives with a mental illness. Mental illnesses include many different conditions that may vary in degree of severity, from very mild to severe, making them common worldwide.

Self-care plays a significant role in maintaining mental health and supporting recovery. Use the tips below to safeguard mental health and improve overall health in return.

- **Spend time in nature.** Going for a walk in nature can help tame stress and break patterns of negative thinking. In Japan, the concept of forest bathing, which involves spending time in a forest or another green area experiencing the different sounds, sights and smells, is said to improve mental health.

- **Set boundaries.** 12 percent of U.S. workers were fully remote in August 2023 with estimates suggesting that number may have increased to around 14 percent by 2025. Working from home can make it more challenging to set firm divisions on time spent working and



for home life. Establishing boundaries means not being available 24/7 for calls or emails and not feeling guilty about taking time away from work.

- **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of exercise each day can get feel-good endorphins flowing through the body to boost mood and bodily health.

- **Get more sleep.** Adults generally need between seven and nine hours of sleep for optimal health. Create consistent sleep routines like avoiding screens before bed, and avoiding caffeine or vigorous exercise late in the day to improve sleep.

- **Try relaxing activities.** Activities like reading, listening to music, meditation, or low-stress crafts and hobbies can help calm the mind.

- **Socialize with others.** People feeling stress or anxiety might think they are alone, but having conversations with others can illustrate that these are common problems and there are solutions. Sometimes just talking about an issue can help you overcome it.

- **Use your vacation time.** 62 percent of Americans don't use all of their paid time off, and nearly half of U.S. employees with paid time off take less time than their employers offer. Failure to take time off is a recipe for burnout.

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The impact of reading on cognitive decline



Aging and change go hand in hand. Although some may bemoan the gray hairs that start to arrive or stiffness in the knees that seems to sneak up on a person in middle age, such concerns are not necessarily enough to lose sleep over. However, many people 50

or older are nervous about the potential for cognitive issues like dementia as they grow older.

Around 6.7 million people have Alzheimer's disease in the United States. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can rob people of

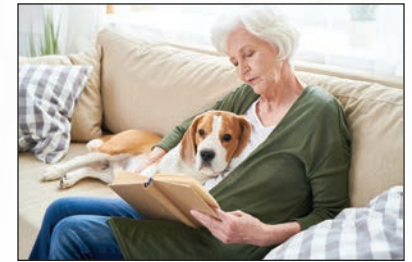
their memories, personalities and abilities to live satisfying, independent lives. While it may not be impossible to prevent all cognitive issues completely, there is reason to believe that reading could be an ally in cognitive care.

Reading stimulates the brain and has been shown to slow down cognitive decline in old age. It could also help slow down memory loss.

The powers of reading were noticed more than 10 years ago when a 2013 study from researchers at Emory University measured readers' MRI scans as they read books. They found the deeper readers went into a story, the more areas of their brains were activated. This activity remained elevated for several days after participants finished their books. The more a person reads, the stronger complex net-

works in the brain become.

Older people with mild cognitive impairment who engage in high levels of activities like reading, hobbies and word games have better memory, working memory, attention, and processing speed than those who do not take part in such endeavors. A 2021 study found that high levels of cognitive activity, like reading and writing letters, can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by five years among those age 80 and over.



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How it pays to pedal your bicycle

Taking time for physical activity each day can pay notable dividends in a person's long-term health, but many people find it hard to maintain their motivation to exercise. Finding a physical activity that's both fun and great exercise can help surpass that motivational hump.

Cycling fits the bill for millions of people who want to have fun and be physically active at the same time. The number of cycling participants in the United States is estimated to have increased from 42.4 million in 2010 to 54.7 million in 2022.

These millions across the U.S. who cycle each day or week are reaping numerous health benefits, each of which merits consideration for those looking for a fun way to be physically active.

- **Build strength and improve flexibility:** Cycling increases muscular strength and endurance.



ance. The movements required to pedal a bicycle help to loosen the quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, and hips, ultimately contributing to a more flexible body for regular cyclists.

- **Improve balance:** Cycling requires riders to be in a specific position while riding their bikes, and that requirement trains the body to maintain better posture. Riding a bike requires balance, so it makes sense that riding more often will lead to notable improvements in balance that can reduce risk for falls.

- **Work out the entire body:** In addition to working out lower body muscles, cycling benefits areas above the waist, too. It relies on the core and other upper body muscles to help maintain stability and control, keeping abdominal muscles activated throughout each session on a bike.

- **Mental health benefits:** Cycling also can benefit mental health by encouraging riders on non-stationary bikes to get outdoors. Researchers have uncovered numerous ways that exposure to nature benefits mental health.

Summertime skin protection strategies

Summer is a season to soak up some sun, but it's important to keep skin protection in mind while working on your tan.

Use the tips below to stay safe while having fun in the sun.

- **Wear sunscreen every day:** People with fair skin may already know from experience that they need to apply sunscreen in the summer, but even people with naturally darker skin that tends to tan instead of burn need to wear sunscreen every day. Apply roughly one ounce of sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 two to three times each day in summer. The sunscreen rule can apply year-round, but is especially important in summer when people tend to spend more time outdoors than during other times of year.

- **Opt for protective clothing:** Unbleached cotton, tightly woven T-shirts or shorts, and wide-brimmed hats provide excellent protection against the sun. Many manufacturers now offer high-SPF clothing that absorbs UV rays. Pairing such clothing with daily applications of sunscreen can be a great way to protect skin against summer sun.

- **Pay attention to your skin:** Routine skin examinations in summertime can uncover warning signs of skin cancer. For example, discoloration, a changing mole or a rough red patch of skin are early warning signs of skin cancer. Contact a dermatologic surgeon immediately if any of these signs are detected.

- **Avoid sunbathing to reduce sunburn risk:** The best way to prevent exposure to



potentially harmful sunburn is to stay in the shade. Though many consider a little color in summertime harmless, the reality is that skin cancer develops over time and sunburn is dangerous. Each

sunburn a person gets increases his or her risk of developing skin cancer, so even a mild sunburn that disappears in a day or two can have a long-term and potentially deadly impact.

6 tips for staying hydrated this summer



Summer is marked by hot and humid conditions that can make a day at the beach or in the pool ideal, but being close to water doesn't prevent dehydration.

Water is critical to every cell,

tissue and organ in the human body to function properly. It helps to regulate body temperature, flush waste from the body, lubricate and cushion joints, and promote healthy digestion. And that's just the start.

So, when temperatures climb and the body begins sweating to cool off, it is vital to replenish lost fluids at a faster rate. Studies say women should consume 2.7 liters of fluid per day, while men need 3.7 liters. These amounts increase if one is exercising, sweating, has an illness like a fever, or is vomiting.

Here are six ways to stay properly hydrated during hot summer days:

1. Drink water when you wake up. Start the day off with a glass of water to give you an energy boost and get your metabolism moving.

2. Coffee and tea count toward fluid intake. Drinking your favorite tea or coffee is another way to take in fluids, so having a cup or two should be fine.

3. Certain foods are hydrating as well. Cucumbers, celery, tomatoes, watermelon, strawberries, grapefruit, and peppers can all help hydrate the body.

4. Make water more fun. Add unsweetened flavoring to water, squeeze in lemon or lime juice, or float cucumber or apple slices in the water for some flavor.

5. Reach for calorie-free beverages before food. It's easy to mistake the signs of dehydration for hunger. By drinking a glass of water or another unsweetened beverage prior to every meal, you can stay hydrated and reduce the amount of food you eat.

6. Occasionally consume electrolyte powders and drinks. Working out in the heat or sweating profusely can unbalance electrolytes in the body. An electrolyte-infused beverage can help replenish lost substances like sodium, calcium and potassium.

What dental hygiene does for overall health

Without proper brushing and flossing, bacteria in the mouth can grow unchecked. Over time, that bacteria can infiltrate and break down the soft tissues in the gums and teeth, eventually leading to decay and gum disease.

Gum disease is linked to heart problems, kidney diseases and certain types of cancer.

The following are correlations between oral health and overall health:

- **Endocarditis:** When bacteria or other germs from the mouth or another part of the body spread through the bloodstream, they can attach to certain areas of the heart. This causes an infection in the inner lining of the heart chambers or valves.

- **Pregnancy and birth complications:** Periodontitis has been linked to low birth weight and premature birth.



• Cardiovascular disease:

While it's not fully understood why, clogged arteries, stroke and heart disease may be linked to inflammation and infection caused by oral bacteria.

Pneumonia: Bacteria in the mouth may be pulled into the lungs, where it can lead to respiratory illness, such as pneumonia.

In return, certain diseases in the body can lead to issues in the mouth. HIV/AIDS may cause mucosal lesions in the mouth. Those with osteoporosis may have weakened periodontal bone and tooth loss, and research has shown that diabetes puts gum health at risk.

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How Haywood Regional Medical Center helps the community

Haywood Regional Medical Center works to meet the evolving healthcare needs of the community through the recruitment of new providers, the expansion of services and continued investments in technology and infrastructure.

Haywood Regional Medical Center has released its 2024 Community Impact Report. Here's a few take-aways.

- **Economy:** The hospital provided more than \$80.6 million in salaries, wages, and benefits to approximately 815 employees.
- **Providers:** Haywood Regional welcomed 133 new providers in key specialties in 2024, including internal medicine, urgent care, emergency medicine, surgery, family medicine, pulmonology and sleep medicine. The hospital invested over \$43,000 in professional development and tuition assistance to help staff grow and elevate

the care they provide.

- **Equipment:** The hospital also invested more than \$2.8 million in capital improvements, including a new breast ultrasound machine, a bone densitometry scanner, emergency department patient monitors, new operating room equipment, and a 3D, contrast-enhanced mammography unit.
- **Indigent care:** The hospital also provided more than \$23.6 million in health services to individuals in need — underscoring its continued dedication to ensuring access to high-quality care for all patients, regardless of their ability to pay.
- **Supporting nonprofits:** Haywood Regional remained an active supporter of local organizations and initiatives working to strengthen the community. These included partnerships with the Haywood Chamber of Commerce, Haywood County Schools, Haywood

Community College Foundation, Haywood County Senior Games & Special Olympics, Haywood Healthcare Foundation, Haywood Pathways Center, Lake Junaluska Conference & Retreat Center, Cherokee Indian Hospital Foundation, and Kids Advocacy Resource Effort (KARE), among others.

In the aftermath of Helene, HRMC staff jumped into action to assist relief efforts across the county. After the storm hit, tons of resources poured in from Lifepoint, and staff worked to organize and distribute them to team members in need, as many were without power for extended periods of time and some lost their homes.

Haywood Regional Medical Center's mission is making communities healthier®. By creating places where people choose to come for healthcare, physicians and providers want to practice and employees want to work, HRMC



Haywood Regional Medical Center was awarded an "A" hospital safety grade from The Leapfrog Group, a national nonprofit watchdog that sets standards for excellence in patient care.

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Hearing loss plays a role in cognitive decline



Majestic Hearing

Tamara Crawford is a licensed Hearing Instrument Specialist at Majestic Hearing Aid and Tinnitus Center.

in adults ages 66-90, and all but confirms what some audiologists have suspected for years.

I watched my mother and father both succumb to dementia after suffering hearing loss. They both were in denial about their hearing problems, and both were robbed of

By Tamara Crawford,
Majestic Hearing

Nearly a third of all dementia cases can be attributed to hearing loss according to a new study from Columbia University's Irving Medical Center in New York city.

The research was conducted over eight years

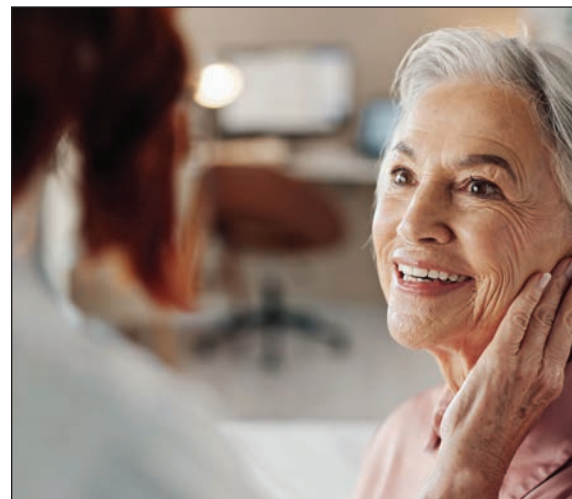
their memory in their final years.

My daughter, who is now a teenager, never knew her grandparents because of dementia. The only memories she has of them, they did not know who she was.

Had they corrected their hearing before it was too late, the quality of time they had left could have been so much better. It is the responsibility of hearing and health care professionals to educate the public and do whatever possible to help anyone with hearing loss avoid dementia.

Helping the hearing impaired can not only reconnect them to the world of hearing, but also prevent long-term cognitive impacts. Corrected hearing may have spared countless people from dementia – not only for themselves, but for the loved ones that cherish them.

Majestic Hearing Aid and Tinnitus Center pledges to continue to offer these efforts to correct hearing and guard against dementia. By offering free tests and audiometric



testing to all of North Carolina, Majestic helps ensure no one is left untested.

Everyone should have the opportunity to reduce the possibility of dementia and share memories with their loved ones for many years to come. Visit or call Majestic Hearing for a free hearing evaluation for ages 62-90.

Are there ways to prevent Alzheimer's disease?

Researchers around the globe continue to investigate Alzheimer's disease, the most commonly diagnosed form of dementia.

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive form of dementia that affects around 6.5 million people in the United States. Since AD affects parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language, notable symptoms include memory loss and difficulties communicating.

AD can be a debilitating condition, so naturally people want to do all they can to avoid it. Right now there are no proven prevention strategies nor a cure. However, there is strong evidence that healthy lifestyle habits may play a role in reducing AD risk, as well as risk for other types of dementia.

- **Reduce risk for heart disease.** Some autopsy studies show that as many as 80 percent of individuals with AD also have cardiovascular disease. Lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels may, in turn, help individuals reduce their risk for AD.

- **Eat a balanced diet.** Many doctors recommend the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in vegetables, fruits and lean protein coming from sources containing omega-3 fatty acids.

- **Embrace physical activity.** Regular physical activity may lower the risk of AD as well as vascular dementia. Exercise can boost blood and oxygen flow in the brain. Cardiovascular exercise is an essential part of any wellness plan.

- **Treat hearing loss: Studies have shown that people who use hearing aids to manage their hearing loss are less likely to develop dementia.** Hearing aid use was also associated with fewer memory problems and thinking problems independent of dementia. Hearing loss is only a risk factor and does not mean that a person with hearing loss will develop dementia. However, to reduce the risk of dementia, it's important to get your hearing tested.

- **Maintain social connections and activity.** A number of studies indicate that

maintaining strong social connections and keeping mentally active as people age might lower the risk of cognitive decline as well as AD.

- **Keep a healthy weight.** Manage weight through diet and exercise.

Although there is no guaranteed way to avoid a dementia diagnosis, certain lifestyle changes may help people reduce their risk.



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I am so appreciative of the chiropractors and the staff. Their knowledge, expertise, and genuine care for patients is commendable. I always feel better after my visits. Ginger Y. ★★★★★

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