

TAKE CHARGE!



September 2022

Got Noisy Joints?

Sounds in the knees are fairly common.

You may hear a snapping or clicking sound when you bend or straighten your knees, or when you walk or go up or downstairs. Called **crepitus** (Latin for **rattle**), this can also occur in shoulder, elbow or neck joints. Often, the older you get, the louder the noise.

Benign (painless) crepitus is caused by the rubbing of cartilage on the joint surface or other soft tissues around the joints during joint movement, likely a result of air movement in the joint. The mechanics of your knees and other joints naturally make some level of noise when they're in use.

Crepitus with pain can be a sign of arthritis, dysfunction of the patellofemoral joint (between the knee cap and the thigh bone), injury with scar tissue, a meniscus tear, or a tendon moving over a bony prominence within the joint.

Even though benign crepitus or a joint clicking sound is not typically harmful or unhealthy, it can be annoying during exercise or other activities, such as climbing stairs, or simply rising from sitting.



Effective solutions for reducing joint clicking or pain during movement: Adopt a gentle stretching routine prior to strenuous physical activity or exercise. In addition, focus on muscle training exercises that strengthen your knees, legs and neck to lessen crepitus.

If you have regular joint noises accompanied by pain and/or swelling, consult your health care provider.

“A mistake is simply another way of doing things.”

— Katharine Graham

 **The Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Save Your Neck**, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V9tools.

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date pandemic information visit coronavirus.gov.

city events

Taking Sleep Seriously
Thursday, September 8
 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Deferred Compensation Webinars

Navigating the Site
Thursday, September 8
 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Preparing for Retirement
Thursday, September 15
 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Considerations When Leaving the City
Thursday, September 22
 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Building a Successful Team
Wednesday, September 14
 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Riding the Change Wave: Panel Discussion
Tuesday, September 20
 11:30 am – 12:30 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Thriving Families
Wednesday, September 21
 12:30 pm – 1:00 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Suicide Prevention
Thursday, September 22
 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

How FSAs Work
Tuesday, September 27
 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Embracing Happiness
Wednesday, September 28
 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
 Click [here](#) to register

Stretching for Life

Beyond building muscle and aerobic fitness, we need to be flexible. Routine stretching moves us in the right direction. It can help keep your muscles flexible and strong while maintaining a healthy range of motion in your joints. Without that flexibility, the muscles shorten and become tight.

For example, tight leg muscles, a common result of long periods of sitting, may inhibit your ability to fully extend your legs and maintain leg strength. Inflexible hamstring muscles across the hip and knee can lead to chronic low back pain.

The primary areas to maintain mobility are in your lower extremities: calves, hamstrings, hip flexors in the pelvis and quadriceps in the front of your thighs. Routinely stretching your shoulders, neck and lower back is also helpful.

Extra benefits: Stretching also improves posture and balance, and helps prevent falls.

Goal: Choose a routine stretching program you can perform at least four to five times a week. Review the basics with your health care provider, or learn more at acsm.org.

Example: A hamstring stretch can help keep the muscles in the back of your thighs flexible. Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you. Bend forward holding your hands down your legs until you feel a mild burn. Hold for 30 seconds; then slowly return to a sitting position.

Stay committed long term. It can save your muscles from becoming stiff, achy and weak — and improve your energy and comfort.



Vaccines: Facts You Need to Know

Vaccines are a proven, effective means of controlling life-threatening illnesses around the globe. They boost your body's natural immune response to diseases caused by viruses and bacteria. Vaccine programs throughout the world have led to improved overall health of our population by shrinking the spread of disease, permanent and temporary disability and infant mortality.

Although vaccines are proven to be safe and effective based on sound scientific evidence, several myths about their effectiveness and risks have continued for decades. While some people need to forgo vaccinations due to potential allergic reactions, others refuse them for themselves or their children for several reasons, mainly a mistrust of the science.

As we enter flu season, review some current facts about vaccines in the U.S.

✓ **FACT:** Vaccines undergo five phases of research and development that can take up to 15 years before approval by the FDA for public use. **Note:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. government declared that circumstances existed to justify the emergency development and use of vaccines to prevent contagion.

✓ **FACT:** Billions of vaccine doses have been safely administered in the U.S. for more than 50 years. To date, more than 365 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the U.S. and the number is growing.

✓ **FACT:** Worldwide, vaccines prevent an estimated 2.5 million deaths among children younger than age five each year. Routine vaccinations in children are recommended to prevent diseases, including chickenpox, influenza (flu), measles, polio, and others.

✓ **FACT:** Pregnant women are advised to get vaccinated against flu and whooping cough (pertussis) during each pregnancy to protect both mother and baby. Pregnant women are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Some women may need other vaccines before, during or after they become pregnant. Check with your health care provider.

✓ **FACT:** Older adults and those with chronic health conditions have a greater risk of complications from influenza and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Several vaccines are advised for those age 65-plus and younger adults with diabetes, heart disease, lung disease or other chronic conditions that put them at greater risk. Adults who have heart disease are six times more likely to have a heart attack within seven days of flu infection.

✓ **FACT:** The best way to prevent flu and potentially serious flu complications is to get an annual vaccination. The CDC recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone age six months and older.

✓ **FACT:** Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is the best protection against contagion. Studies suggest that if you have had COVID-19 and are not vaccinated against it, your risk of getting reinfected is twice as likely than for those who were infected and got vaccinated.

✓ **FACT:** All three COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. underwent rigorous clinical trials, testing on 118,000 people. Side effects, including pain at the injection site, headache, fatigue and nausea, were mild to moderate and resolved within a few days.

✓ **FACT:** The vaccines cannot infect you with COVID-19. They do not contain the COVID-19 virus. Follow your health care provider's recommendation for booster shots.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant illness and loss of life for the world's population. Despite the approval of vaccines to prevent COVID-19 illness, myths continue circulating about the production, effectiveness and risks of this vaccine.

Learn more about vaccines at historyofvaccines.org.



Parenting College Kids

When your children start college, your role changes. Your interest and support are still important. But you also need to recognize college is a time when your child is becoming more independent as they move into adulthood.

No matter how much advice you've given to your son or daughter, it will take time for them to learn how to handle many aspects of college life themselves — from studying and turning in assignments on time, to handling their money responsibly and doing their laundry. They are bound to run into problems if they're homesick or upset with a roommate, and they turn to mom or dad.

While it may be hard, experts advise letting college students handle problems on their own. Listen to your child's concerns but don't try to fix them. Instead, ensure your student has contact information handy for appropriate help, such as their dorm resident adviser or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Emory University psychology professor Marshall Duke, who has helped smooth the transition for parents seeing kids off to college, offers these tips:

- Establish a regular communication schedule when your offspring contacts you; don't constantly text and call.
- Don't change your child's room at home (at least not for a semester or two) so they have a home base.
- Be realistic about grades. Few students make it through college with a 4.0 grade point average. New college students need time to learn how to study and do their best at college level.

If your newly minted college students are living at home, talk things out. Discuss expectations about any household duties, such as laundry, they need to attend to. But remember: They are young adults and need independence to thrive academically and personally.

Tame Your Grocery Bill

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Grocery prices steadily increased in recent years due to the pandemic, supply chain issues, and shortages of transportation and labor.

All of this adds up to sticker shock at the cash register, but there are some things you can do to lower your grocery bill.

The largest price increases have occurred in meat, dairy and seafood products. With animal-based food prices going up, it makes sense to add more affordable plant-based proteins to your plate, such as tofu, beans and lentils. Studies show that plant-based diets cost up to 34% less than animal-based diets. Even a flexitarian plan, where you eat meat, fish or poultry occasionally, can cut costs by 14%.

Shop with a grocery list, so you only get what you need and don't duplicate what you already have. Buy what's in season and what's on sale. After you shop, use the most perishable foods first before they go bad and go to waste. Remember to compare prices as you shop. Often generic or store brands cost less than the leading brands and offer the same high quality.

You can often save money by opting for frozen or canned vegetables, fruit, beans and fish — and they are just as nutritious as fresh. Buying foods in a near-natural state will save money, too — for example, whole carrots and a head of lettuce cost less than baby-cut carrots and bagged salad. You pay for the ready-made convenience, but you may not need to.

Finally, it may help to use a credit card or store-based loyalty card that offers cash back on grocery purchases, or redeemable points that you can put toward free groceries.



Farro Apple Salad with Arugula

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 cup farro grain, wheat berries or pot barley | ¼ cup chopped pecans |
| 3 cups arugula or salad greens | ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese |
| 1 medium apple, diced | 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil |
| ½ cup each fresh chopped mint and basil | 1½ tbsp apple cider vinegar |
| | 1 tsp Dijon mustard |
| | Pinch salt and pepper |

Add farro to a pot with 3 cups of water. **Bring** to a boil and reduce to simmer. **Cook** for 40 minutes or until tender. **Drain** and run under cool water. **Set** aside. **In** a large serving bowl, add cool farro, arugula, apple, mint, basil, pecans and goat cheese. **In** a small bowl, mix olive oil, vinegar, Dijon, salt and pepper. **Pour** over salad, stir to combine and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 362 calories | 10g protein | 18g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 10g mono fat | 4g poly fat | 40g carbohydrate | 6g sugar | 5g fiber | 371mg sodium

EASY recipe



Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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News & Notes

- **Plan for 2023 Health Care FSA Tax Savings:** Review your 2022 out-of-pocket expenses to estimate your 2023 FSA contributions. Consider office copays, deductibles, prescription drugs, dental and vision costs that you can offset with an FSA. The maximum contribution for the health care FSA in 2023 will be \$2,850. Remember: up to \$550 from 2022 can carry over to 2023, as long as it results in a health care FSA with a minimum balance of \$120.
- **Refocus With Support.** Between September 1 and October 31, employees who join WW will be eligible to receive a FREE Weight Watchers Mystery Box with gear to kick start your health journey. All employees and covered spouses/adult dependents receive 50% off the retail price and can join for as low as \$8.48 per month. Sign up at WW.com/us/CityofSeattle by October 31. Redeem your Mystery Box by November 1, 2022.
- **See What's Different in '23.** Make your 2023 benefit choices in Employee Self-Service on Monday, October 3 through Friday, October 21. Watch your home mail for an Open Enrollment letter in late September to learn about changes in 2023.

EXPERT advice — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month.



Q: Prostate cancer screening?

A: The American Cancer Society recommends a discussion with your health care provider about prostate cancer screening starting at age 50 for men at average risk. Men at increased risk should have the discussion earlier — usually at age 40 or 45, depending on the level of risk.

For men at high risk, the discussion should occur at age 45. Men at high risk include African Americans and men who have a father or brother who was diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65.

For men at even higher risk, the discussion should occur at age 40. Men in this group include those with more than one first-degree relative (father or brother) who was diagnosed with prostate cancer before age 65.

Ask about the benefits and risks of prostate cancer screening. If you decide to proceed, screening can be done with a PSA blood test and digital rectal exam.



Falls Prevention Week is September 18 to 24.



Preventing Falls, Slips and Trips

Falls are the leading cause of all injuries in older adults, but surprisingly, falls are also a major cause of injury in young adults, according to a Purdue University study. Why? The study attributes many risk factors associated with falls in young adults, including their gender and higher amounts of physical activity. And, as in older adults, some prescription medications can increase the likelihood of falling.

How can you prevent falls?

- **Ask** your health care provider to evaluate your risk for falling.
- **Review** your medications and check with your provider or pharmacist about side effects that might make you dizzy or sleepy.
- **Exercise** regularly to improve balance and strength in the muscles in your legs and lower body.
- **Get** your eyes checked.
- **Ask** your health care provider about taking vitamin D supplements, which may boost your muscle strength and help improve balance.
- **Make** your home safer by removing trip hazards, adding railings and grab bars, improving lighting and adding bathmats to tubs and showers.
- **Don't** walk and text or scroll. Stop to text or put the phone away until you reach your destination.



TIP of the MONTH

It's Whole Grains Month



Whole grains, such as brown rice, oats, barley, quinoa, whole-grain wheat, popcorn (yes, popcorn) and whole rye, offer an array of nutrients. They include fiber, vitamins, minerals, as well as antioxidants, and are the perfect salad base or side dish. Fill a quarter of your plate with whole grains to help reduce your risk of developing heart disease, stroke, inflammation, cancer and type 2 diabetes. Celebrate Whole Grains Month every day of the year.