

TAKE CHARGE!



for health and living

March 2016



My Nose, My Allergies

Nasal allergy, or allergic rhinitis, causes inflammation of the nasal membranes. It occurs in some 50 million Americans who are sensitive to inhaled allergens.

>> **Seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever)** is most often caused by pollen from trees, grasses and weeds carried in the air during different times of the year in different parts of the globe.

>> **Perennial allergic rhinitis** occurs year-round, typically triggered by indoor allergens. Most common offenders: animal dander, mold spores, dust mites and cockroach particles.

>> **If you have symptoms of nasal allergy**, such as sneezing, itching, nasal congestion, watery eyes and runny nose – seasonal or year-round – talk to your health care provider, who can recommend a variety of prescription medications, and over-the-counter symptom relievers including:

>> **Antihistamines**, which help relieve sneezing, itching and runny nose. They work best taken routinely during allergy season and before symptoms take control.

>> **Decongestants**, which narrow the blood vessels and reduce blood flow in the affected area to relieve congestion and improve breathing. They come in oral tablets and eye or nose drops and sprays.

>> **While there is no cure for allergic rhinitis**, researchers continue to look for new ways to prevent symptoms, including drugs that stop pollen from entering the body and allergy vaccines.

city events

Supporting Family Members with Mental Health Issues

Thursday, March 3

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Webinar

Login: See future email flyer*

The “Help Me Understand Investing” Challenge – Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, March 16

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

SMT 4080

Tech Neck Seminar

Thursday, March 17

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

SMT 4050

The “Help Me Understand Investing” Challenge – Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, March 23

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

SMT 4080

Social Security 101

Thursday, March 24

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Bertha K. Landes, City Hall

Blood Pressure Screening

Wednesday, March 30

Stop by between 10:30 am

& 1:30 pm

SMT 4080

*Or, call Central Benefits at (206) 615-1340.



Stress Management 101

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Stress is unavoidable, but it needn't be unmanageable. Changing how you respond to stressful situations can help protect your health. Because we all react differently to stress, it's best to personalize your management plan. Start with these steps: ➔ Continued on page 4.



March 20 to 26 is Poison Prevention Week.

More than 90% of poisonings in the U.S. occur in the home. **Reminders:** Store medicines and toxic household substances in original, labeled, child-resistant containers **out of children's reach**. Kids tend to mimic adults, so don't take medicine in front of them. For emergencies, contact your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222. Find more poison prevention tips at www.poisonprevention.org.



Walk Your Way to Fitness

Walking is the ideal exercise for just about everyone. Put 1 foot in front of the other – it's that simple. Here's how:

Step 1: Dress right:



- Wear well-fitting walking shoes with a flexible, cushioned sole and plenty of toe room. Socks made of breathable fabric keep feet dry and free of blisters.
- Wear nonbinding, weather-appropriate clothing, indoors or out. Carry a water bottle.
- Apps and wearable devices can help you monitor your physical activity.

Step 2: Warm up and stretch:



- As you begin walking, do a 5-minute warm-up walk using your largest muscles repeatedly (such as arm swings and back rotations) prior to brisk walking.
- Stretch right after your walk while your muscles are still warm. Never stretch a cold muscle.
- Keep shoulders back, head up and chest lifted. Never slouch forward.
- Allow your arms to swing naturally. Don't clench your fists.

Step 3: Start slowly:



- If you're not used to exercising, don't expect too much right away. Start by walking at a moderate pace for just 10 minutes. **Goal:** Walk most days of the week, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- As you get used to walking, increase speed, distance and time, or carry hand weights. Try walking uphill or take a challenging nature hike.

Step 4: Stay safe:



- Carry your smartphone for emergencies only (phone use while walking can distract you from potential hazards, such as traffic).
- Know where you're going and stay aware of your surroundings. Walk with others. If walking at night, stay in well-lit, well-populated areas. Let family members know your route.



March is Kidney Month.

QuikQuiz™:

Be Kind to Your Kidneys



How much do you know about chronic kidney disease? Test your knowledge:

1. The primary function of your kidneys is controlling urination.
True False
2. Type 1 and type 2 diabetes are major risk factors for developing kidney disease.
True False
3. Kidney disease often goes undetected until very advanced.
True False
4. Following a Mediterranean-style diet can fight chronic kidney disease.
True False



ANSWERS

1. **False** – Your bladder controls urination. Kidneys remove waste and toxic byproducts; control body fluids and red blood cell production; and help regulate blood pressure.
2. **True** – Other risk factors include being 60-plus, having high blood pressure and a family history of kidney failure, and overusing pain relievers.
3. **True** – Only as kidney disease worsens are you likely to feel sick and weak from symptoms such as anemia, weak bones and nerve damage. Chronic kidney disease (CKD) can lead to kidney failure; early detection and treatment can often keep it from getting worse.
4. **True** – Study results: Dietary patterns following the Mediterranean plan were linked with a 50% lower risk of CKD and a 42% lower risk of rapid kidney function decline. This diet includes high intake of fruits, vegetables, fish, legumes and heart-healthy fats.

Colonoscopy: A Lifesaver



March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Colorectal cancer usually starts with a slow-growing polyp on the lining of the colon or rectum. Screening with a **colonoscopy** can detect these polyps and remove them before they turn cancerous.

- >> **The colonoscopy involves viewing the entire colon** with a long, flexible, lighted tube. It's recommended every 10 years after age 50, or earlier or more frequently, depending on your personal health history.
- >> **Many people dread and avoid this lifesaving procedure**, particularly because of the pre-exam preparation. You'll switch to an eating plan a few days before the exam that helps cleanse the bowel. Follow your health care provider's instructions.
- >> **Then, the day before the exam**, you begin drinking a powerful bowel-clearing substance. Coping with the resulting diarrhea is the most difficult part. The process takes about 16 hours. However, clearing the bowel as much as possible helps ensure the polyps aren't missed in the exam.
- >> **Set aside enough time to complete the prep without interruptions.** Arrange for the privacy you need for cleansing with as little stress as possible.



All things considered, a colonoscopy is well worth the effort.

Back Basics: top safety Lifting Precautions

The best way to protect against back injury is to avoid lifting when possible. Use a hand truck, lifting straps, or ask for help instead. If you can, reduce the amount of weight lifted by breaking down the load into manageable sizes. For instance, instead of moving a box of books, carry a few at a time.



Before lifting:

Know the load. Determine if the load is too heavy to handle by yourself and ask for help if it is. Know your limitations and use mechanical help if you need it – a hand truck, dolly or forklift.

Check for obstacles. Before you start walking with a load in your arms, make sure pathways are clear.

Position yourself. The best position to lift from is in your shoulder-to-waist area, but if you need to lift from a lower level, position yourself by keeping feet apart and squatting down as close to the object as possible. Keep heels off the ground and get a good grip. Special caution is needed when lifting objects above shoulder level. Get as close to the object as possible by using a sturdy step stool or ladder. Set your feet shoulder-distance apart and gently lift the object.

While lifting:

Lift slowly. When you lift, use leg, abdominal and gluteal muscles, and keep the load as close to you as possible. Bend your knees and keep your back straight.

Don't twist. Turn your whole body if you need to make a turn.

Doing these few things can help you to avoid injury. And your back will thank you.



Tip of the Month: What to drink?

What should you drink with a balanced meal? Most plate models depict a glass of water and a glass of milk. If your ¼ protein slot is filled with dairy foods, such as cheese or yogurt, the additional milk is not necessary. And water is always a great choice!



eating smart



March is
Nutrition Month.



Master Your Plate

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

When you want advice about healthy eating, food guides and charts can be confusing and difficult to use. Instead, focus on your plate at each meal. Here's what it should look like:

- **Fill ½ of the plate with vegetables and fruit.** This may be raw vegetables, salad, or steamed, broiled, roasted or stir-fried options. Anything goes!
- **Fill ¼ of the plate with protein-rich foods:** Lean meat, poultry and fish are all good options, but you can also mix things up with tofu, lentils, beans, Greek yogurt, cheese, eggs, nuts or seeds.
- **Fill the remaining ¼ with grains:** Try brown rice, 100% whole-grain pasta, quinoa, buckwheat or oats.



See what to drink below.



Sticking with this plate method can ensure you get plenty of vegetables and fruit, and limit starchy, refined white carbohydrates or fatty meats.

But what if you're eating a mixed meal that doesn't have clearly divided plate portions? Think about the ingredients in your dish and decide what's missing. For example, if your salad is mostly vegetables, add some chicken breast and a scoop of cooked quinoa.



The plate model works for breakfast, too. Great combos include cereal, milk and fruit or eggs with toast and tomato.

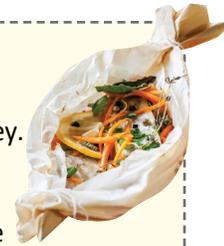
BAKED COD IN PARCHMENT

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
2 tbsp lemon juice
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper
½ cup fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped
4, 4 oz. cod fillets
2 medium carrots, julienned
1 red pepper, julienned
1 lemon, sliced

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- In a small bowl, stir together the oil, lemon, salt, pepper and parsley.
- Cut 4 sheets of parchment paper, each 18 x 18 inches. Onto 1 side of each piece of parchment, place 1 cod fillet and ¼ of the carrots and peppers.
- Drizzle each with 1 heaping tbsp of the parsley-lemon-oil sauce; top with a lemon slice. Fold the parchment paper over the fish and roll the ends up to create a packet.
- Place packets on a baking sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes, until fish is opaque.



Per serving (1 fillet packet):

241 calories | 27g protein | 12g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 8g mono fat | 2g poly fat
| 62mg cholesterol | 9g carbohydrate | 2g sugar | 3g fiber | 406mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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News & Notes

› Preparing Your 2015 Tax Return

The new income tax Form 1095-C will be mailed to you by March 31, 2016, but you don't need to wait for it to file your 2015 tax return. On the "Health Care: individual responsibility" line under "Other taxes", you'll need to indicate whether you had "Full-year coverage" in 2015. The 1095-C merely provides verification of City medical coverage for your records.

› File 2015 FSA Claims by March 31, 2016

If you participated in the Health Care or Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) in 2015, submit your claims and documentation now to [Navia Benefit Solutions](#). Filing now will allow you time to address any problems such as substituting receipts for denied claims or resubmitting unreadable scans or faxes.

› Carry Over up to \$500 – Health FSA

If you have a balance remaining in your 2015 Health Care FSA, up to \$500 will be carried over automatically into 2016 as long as it results in a minimum account balance of \$120 in 2016. The carry over amount will be calculated and available for your 2016 expenses in mid-April after [Navia Benefit Solutions](#) has processed all 2015 reimbursement claims.

10 Qualities of a Great Communicator

Spruce up your communication skills by developing these stellar qualities.

1. **Skilled communicators listen actively to others** and don't think about what they will say next while someone else is talking.
2. **Take the time to understand and empathize with your audience**, so you can see things from their point of view.
3. **Developing the ability to break down a complex idea** and explain it in a way that makes sense to everyone is an essential asset.
4. **Good communicators keep their promises**, provide answers promptly, and avoid saying things they don't mean.
5. **Know when to let others take the floor**, and recognize when your silence is saying something powerful.
6. **Ask questions and provide feedback** to check that you understand what the other means.
7. **Communication experts use nonverbal cues**, such as gestures, facial expressions and body posture, to help convey their message and express openness.
8. **Focus on explaining your own thoughts and feelings**, rather than pointing fingers. Phrases that start with "you" often put others on the defensive.
9. **Good communicators respect others' time** and get to the point directly.
10. **If you trust your abilities and knowledge**, you will stand behind what you say and communicate effectively.



expert advice

—Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Q: Help for insomnia?

A: Long-term difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep can take a large health toll. Not only does insomnia reduce daytime productivity and alertness, it increases the risk for accidents, weight gain, heart disease and diabetes.



During **Sleep Awareness Week, March 6 to 13**, take these steps toward better slumber and better health:

✓ **Practice sleep-friendly habits:** Limit or abstain from caffeine and alcohol. Avoid large meals before bedtime. Keep a regular sleep schedule. And allow a 1-hour period to unwind before turning in.

✓ **Take time to relax.** Relaxation exercises such as meditation, mindfulness and guided imagery can provide benefit.

✓ **Cognitive behavioral therapy.** This form of counseling reduces negative thoughts and worries that interfere with sleep.

✓ **Minimize medications.** Don't rely on sleeping pills for more than a few weeks without consulting your health care provider. Report any side effects such as drowsiness or dizziness.

Stress Management 101

→ Continued from page 1.

- **Identify the source of your stress.** Is it something external (long commute, recent loss) or internal (illness, attitudes)? Is there a pattern to the things that upset you?
- **Review how you handle stress.** Keep a stress journal: Note stressful events, how you felt, how you responded and what helped you feel better. Reduce stress by following the **4 As: avoid** stressors, **alter** situations, **adapt** to change and **accept** reality.
- **Take care of health priorities.** Do you get enough rest, nutritious food, exercise and social support? These are the foundations of a healthier, happier life.
- **Be honest.** Do you aggravate the situation by procrastinating, distracting yourself instead of addressing problems, soothing yourself with food, alcohol or drugs, blaming others or denying that you are stressed?
- **Do something fun or relaxing every day.** Even 5 to 10 minutes of deep breathing, stretching, playing with a pet, or enjoying nature can do wonders.

Plan for success: Adopt a few stress-reduction changes and then check regularly for signs of improvement.