

May is Arthritis Awareness Month.



Osteoarthritis: Do You Know the Facts?

After decades of hard work, your joints will undergo some degree of degeneration. The most common form of joint disease is **osteoarthritis (OA)**.

- 1 It is the leading cause of physical disability in the U.S.
- 2 It occurs with thinning of the cartilage, a tissue that covers and cushions the ends of your bones where they form joints.
- 3 It affects primarily the hips, knees, lower back, hands and neck.
- 4 It causes inflammation, pain, stiffness and reduced function of the affected joint.
- 5 Primary causes include past joint injuries, aging and being overweight.



Losing excess weight decreases stress on the joints, while the more overweight you are, the earlier the onset of OA.

Strengthening the muscles around your joints can help slow OA progression and reduce cartilage damage. **Example:** Doing moderate strength training of your quadriceps (thigh muscles) can reduce the pain of OA in your knees.

Physical therapy and stretching techniques can often help control the progression of OA and improve your mobility.

Long-term sitting can tighten muscles and stiffen joints. If you have OA, don't avoid exercise — daily physical activity is key to maintaining joint function.

During exercise and sports: Stay aware to avoid trauma or major overuse of your joints; wear supportive shoes; gradually increase the time and intensity of your activity; and vary your activities.

You may not prevent the pain and disability of OA altogether, but you can lessen its impact by staying fit. If you have persistent joint pain, see your health care provider.

Q: How can exercise help control stress?

A: Exercise helps reduce stress hormones in the body and boosts chemicals that improve your mood. Becoming fitter gives you a sense of accomplishment, and working out may be a nice break from upsetting situations.

Unlike using alcohol or drugs, coping through exercise can help you feel more able to face difficulties. When you exercise, you physically stress your body intentionally, making you better equipped to respond when emotional stress comes along. Physical activity can also help improve your sleep, energy and concentration, reducing troubling symptoms of anxiety and depression. You may even grow new brain cells.



Exercise can be functional, such as raking leaves or walking to work; it can be fun, such as surfing or dancing; or it can be a gym class or routine. Whichever you prefer, start moving today and enjoy all of the benefits.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

May is Mental Health Month.



May is Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month.

QuikRisk™ Assessment: Skin Sense

Sunscreen can lower your risk of skin cancer and help delay the natural aging of your skin.

When it comes to sun safety, can you pass the screen test? Check **yes** or **no**.



YES NO

- I use sunscreen with a minimum 30 SPF and UVA/UVB protection when outdoors, even on cloudy days.
- I apply 1 to 2 ounces (about 1 full shot glass) of sunscreen to exposed skin 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapply about every 2 hours, and after sweating or swimming.
- I use moisturizers containing sunscreen every day, regardless of weather.
- I avoid the sun or stay in the shade between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest.
- I wear long-sleeve shirts and wide-brimmed hats for sun protection.
- I don't use tanning beds and sunlamps.

Answers on back. >>



Eat the *Mediterranean* Way



By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Studies link the Mediterranean Diet to a reduced risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity and dementia, so it makes sense to enjoy more Mediterranean-inspired meals every day. And you don't need to travel to Greece, Italy or other Mediterranean countries to reap the benefits of these eating habits. Just head to your nearest grocery store and stock up on some staples.

The Mediterranean Diet emphasizes healthy, nutrient-dense whole foods.

Core items for your grocery cart are vegetables, fruit, whole grains, beans, nuts and healthy fats such as olive oil. And instead of salty condiments and sauces, add flavor with a variety of herbs and spices. Start with cumin, cinnamon, basil, oregano and mint.



Many Mediterranean meals are plant-based and filled with protein-rich nuts, seeds, beans, tofu and eggs rather than meat. Delicious dishes such as chickpea stew, lentil and vegetable soup, and fluffy omelets are meal mainstays.

Fish and seafood are part of the diet and are recommended for meals at least twice per week. Poultry is included, but red meat is recommended only occasionally.

Interestingly, the Mediterranean Diet isn't just about what you eat; it also focuses on whom you eat with. It encourages you to enjoy meals with friends and family, and to slow down and enjoy your food rather than eating on the go. Tenets of the diet also remind you to consume moderate portion sizes and stay physically active.



Start your Mediterranean journey today for a lifetime of better health.

*"There are **no shortcuts** to life's greatest achievements."*

— Anonymous



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/17V5tools.

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May is Better Sleep Month.

Operation SLEEP WELL



When you sleep well you feel well. Quality sleep can mean the difference between feeling positive and mentally sharp with energy to enjoy your day and, alternatively, dragging yourself from 1 activity to another and longing for bedtime.

What's keeping you from sleeping better? Many people experience **acute (short-term) insomnia**. Others develop **chronic insomnia** for months or years, and struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep despite feeling tired.

Insomnia doesn't always have a cause, although some insomnia cases are related to emotional issues — stress, anxiety and depression. Other common causes include chronic pain, restless leg syndrome, sleepwalking, allergies, acid reflux, alcohol abuse and many medications.

Work with your health care provider to find personal solutions, and adopt these habits:

- ✓ Sleep on schedule.
- ✓ Quiet your mind and leave worries for wake time.
- ✓ Cut back on caffeine and skip the alcohol.
- ✓ Review your medications with your provider.
- ✓ Get some exercise.
- ✓ Relax your body and meditate to fall back to sleep.
- ✓ Unplug electronic devices well before bedtime.



QuikRisk™: Skin Sense

Continued from front.

If you answered *yes* to every statement, congratulations. You're doing a good job. If you answered *no* to some or all of them, take steps to better protect your skin.

Let's face it: Tanned skin is damaged skin. Even if it's cool and cloudy outdoors, cover up — UV rays, not the heat, cause skin damage. The most common sign of skin cancer: a change in your skin, including a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal or a change in a mole.