Fiber: are you full of it?

INSIDE:
- Foods that can positively affect your mood
- Sunscreen Summer
- Acne Awareness Month
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Acne Awareness Month

J une is acne awareness month. You read that correctly: acne. Everyone already knows about acne, right?! Well, you may think you know all about this common skin condition, but you might be surprised to know that acne can affect people of all ages, and it has several causes. First, acne is a problem starting with a buildup of dead skin material and naturally produced oil within a hair follicle, or pore. Sometimes that just shows up as a black or white head, but when that follicle breaks open inside the skin, especially when oil-loving bacteria are present, local inflammation happens and other spots known as inflammatory papules or pustules (pimples), and even deep, painful cysts can form. Our treatments are aimed at addressing clogged pores, oil production, bacteria on the skin, and hormones that encourage inflammation.

During the teen years, changes in hormones, especially testosterone-like hormones (androgens), increase the incidence of acne. As dermatology professionals, we look for where on the body the acne occurs, when acne really flares, and what kinds of skin lesions we are seeing, to develop the best treatment plan. Typically, our acne regimens consist of combinations of washes and medications that address as many of the four contributing factors for acne as possible. For example, the skin of adolescents behaves differently than the skin of adults and children in that the top protective layer of dead skin does not slough off as well and it tends to collect in the open hair follicle or pore. Therefore, we often recommend medications that help the skin to slough off more readily, so that it does not clog pores. This can come across as unwanted dryness, but that is actually the drug doing the job of releasing that dead skin. With persistent use, eventually the dryness subsides, and hopefully the acne with it.

For others, natural changes in hormone can contribute to more hormonal acne, so we may prescribe medications aimed at shielding the skin from that hormonal influence. By and large, we do a better job of treating acne when we use a combination of medications and in office treatments. We also counsel patients to avoid high-glycemic foods, skim milk, and whey protein as these dietary factors may make acne worse.

The key to any acne regimen, no matter the cause, is consistency and patience. It takes two to three months to really begin to see what kind of improvement you will get from any combination of acne interventions. Thankfully, there are several over the counter products that are highly effective for treating acne.

Skin care products, like Elta MD and Epionce can be purchased over the counter but are considered “pharmaceutical grade” for their attention to quality ingredients and are most often found in dermatology or aesthetic clinics. The Elta MD Foaming Facial Cleanser contains Bromelain, which is anti-inflammatory and reduces inflammation. A gentle moisturizer, like Elta MD’s AM Therapy provides lightweight moisture without exacerbating acne. AM Therapy (think “acne management”) contains willow bark extract, a precursor to salicylic acid, which helps slough off the dead skin. The most important step in the daily regimen is application of SPF every morning and every two hours when outside. Elta MD’s SPF 46 Clear is specifically formulated for acne prone skin and comes in a traditional or tinted form. The Colorescience SPF 50 brush-on sunscreen is also a great tool to encourage frequent reapplication of sunscreen. For hormonal acne in women, Epionce’s Purifying Cleanser paired with Lytic Sport Tx and Renewal Lite Lotion help combat this troublesome form of acne.

To help maintain clearance of acne, a series of chemical peels can be performed along with extractions, or cleaning out the pores. The Glytone Salicylic Acid treatment series manages that very well. Depending on the severity of the acne, the number of treatments in a series varies. For hormonal acne in women, the VI Purify Peel system can be very effective in managing acne and clearing post inflammatory hyperpigmentation and scarring.

More significant acne scarring may require laser or microneedling treatments. These procedures are comfortable, highly effective and require little to no downtime. These are but a few options available in most dermatology offices, but the possible combinations of treatments are endless and can really be tailored for you. If you’re not sure what to choose, or what factors might be most affecting your acne, speak with your skin care specialist about what options are appropriate for you.

JODY ISBELL, PA-C
JANEL ZITZKA, LPN
SUMMER IS HERE:
Get out the Sunscreen!

BY MOUNTAIN-PACIFIC QUALITY HEALTH
June 1, 2021

As temperatures rise and the sun shines longer every day, it is the perfect time to head outside, get active and enjoy the summer season. Though, along with the sunny weather and outdoor fun comes more exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV radiation comes from the sun and tanning beds and can cause skin cancer.

According to The Journal of the American Medical Association, one in five Americans will get skin cancer at some point during their lives. More than one million new cases are diagnosed in the United States each year. That is more than all other types of cancer combined.

While skin cancer is by far the most common type of cancer, it is also one of the easiest to prevent. As we say hello to summer and UV Safety Awareness Month in July, it is the perfect time to spread the word about the importance of sun-safe habits.

Follow these four steps to help protect you and your family from sunburn and skin cancer.

Wear protective clothing and sunglasses.
Cover up with UV-protective clothes or wear long sleeves and pants when possible. Good protective clothing includes hats and sunglasses. A broad-rimmed hat blocks the sun from your head, face, neck and eyes. Many brands of sunglasses advertise that they block UV rays. Remember, sun damage to the eyes does not just happen in the summer time. Keep those sunglasses handy all year round.

Seek shade.
Whenever possible, stay in the shade, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun is most intense. If you plan to be outside all day, take frequent breaks in the shade.
Avoid sunbathing—both indoors and outdoors! Evidence shows using tanning beds increases the risk of developing melanoma, an aggressive type of skin cancer. Cancer risk increases with every tanning bed visit. Self-tanners or spray-on tans are safer options.

Use sunscreen every day.
This is one of the most important steps to protect yourself from UV rays. Using sunscreen every day cuts your risk of skin cancer by 50 percent. Even on a cloudy day, apply at least two tablespoons of a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Be sure to re-apply every 80 minutes or right after you get out of the water.

Know your risk.
While skin cancer can affect anyone, some people are at a higher risk than others. You may be at a higher risk for certain skin cancers if you ■ have a light or fair skin tone, blue or green eyes and red or blond hair;
■ have a history of blistering sunburns or heavy sun exposure;
■ have a family history of melanoma or have had melanoma in the past.
In addition to adopting sun-safe habits, it is important to do regular skin checks. Skin cancer can show up anywhere on your body, but the most common places are the head, neck and any area that has seen a lot of sun. Start at the scalp and look for any suspicious looking moles, sores, spots, lumps or growths. Pay close attention to those that seem to be growing or that itch, burn or are painful.

If you are concerned about your skin, or think you may have skin cancer, see your doctor or dermatologist as soon as possible. Your doctor can let you know if you need further treatment.

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Say hello to summer...
More than one million new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year. Protect yourself and your family.

...and grab the sunblock!

July is UV Safety Awareness Month!

Learn more at https://www.cancer.org/healthy/be-safe-in-sun.html
So I was reading the results of a CT scan of my abdomen, and the report said: “Abundant feces throughout the colon.”

Well! I’ve certainly heard that before, but I’ve never heard it put so politely. And come to think of it, it’s actually a compliment, sort of like being called a fathead, considering that more than half your brain is fatty acids.

So what is fiber, the stuff of which stools are made, and what’s so great about being full of it?

We think of food and nutrition as being about what we eat and digest, but fiber is what we eat and don’t digest. Technically fiber never even enters your body but just goes through a tube from your mouth to what sounds like a distant planet.

Or a trumpet. More on that later.

Fiber is made of sugar molecules, but they’re in long chains that your digestive system can’t break down. Because fiber can’t nourish you, its role in health was long overlooked by nutritionists as if it were merely background noise.

But that was decades ago, and we know better now.

Fiber helps regulate appetite and bowel regularity and a lot of what happens in between. It’s only present in plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and beans. It tends to keep you from eating too much too fast because of the chewing involved and the sense of fullness that comes from foods high in fiber and water.

And that’s just for starts. So let’s dig in.

There are two kinds of fiber: soluble and insoluble.

Soluble fiber, abundant in oats, beans, apples and even brewed coffee, dissolves in water and becomes gel-like, giving it some really valuable properties. Most obviously, it adds softness to the stool, aiding in constipation.

It also carries away cholesterol, both the cholesterol you eat and the cholesterol your body uses in digesting fats (bile salts).

It slows down the release of sugars, helping prevent a raft of degenerative diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

You may not digest fiber, but you have trillions of friends to do it for you: the bacteria in your intestines.

You have more microorganisms living in your intestines than you have cells in your body: about ten times as many. The friendly microorganisms can feed on fiber and perform services, like producing vitamin K2 and essential short-chain fatty acids called butyrates.

You’ve heard of antibiotics, which are literally “against life” because they kill microorganisms. And maybe you’ve heard of probiotics (literally “for life”), such as lacto- and bifido-bacteria, which perform a surprising host of beneficial functions in your gut. Then there are prebiotics (literally “before life”) that feed those beneficial microorganisms. Many fibers are prebiotics.

And OK, those friendly little gut critters can produce gas. But personally I don’t mind if they make a little noise while they’re devoting their lives to keeping me healthy.

So that’s the soluble fiber story. Now for the insoluble fiber.

Abundant in whole grains, legumes and vegetables, insoluble fiber doesn’t dissolve in water, but it provides other benefits. It adds bulk to the stool. It stimulates the intestines to produce mucus, which provides a protective barrier and makes for a smooth journey. It brushes away waste material along the way.

It also speeds up transit time, which is the time it takes for food to pass through you. That’s important to prevent constipation, since water is absorbed from the stool over time. It also reduces the toxic breakdown products that are produced over time in the intestines. By reducing those toxins you’re reducing your risk of colon cancer.

So these are all reasons to be full of fiber, and you can achieve that exalted state by eating a variety of plant foods. As is often the case, foods are the best way to get your fiber because they provide such a broad spectrum of nutrients and other factors that work together to nourish and protect your body.

There are also dietary supplements that can fill the bill, or the gut, as the case may be. Ingredients range from flax and chia seeds, which are whole, natural, nourishing foods in themselves, to grain or seed components, like psyllium husks and oat bran, to the partially-synthetic methylcellulose, which provides little, if anything, besides fiber.

Since fiber absorbs moisture, be sure to drink enough water when upping your intake. This isn’t a concern with watery foods like oranges, but with dry high-fiber ingredients like bran or flaxseed meal and fiber supplements. As always, it’s wise to make changes gradually.

Now, you should be aware that I’m not a doctor, and what I’ve written is not medical advice. There are in fact people who need to be on a low-fiber diet. So as always, please consult a qualified health professional to address any personal health needs.

Laughing Water is a lifelong yogi, MIT graduate, award-winning online student of introductory philosophy and longtime owner and manager of Helena’s Real Food Market and Deli.
The risks of an overly sedentary lifestyle

Health experts call it “sitting disease.” It refers to when people spend more of their time behind a desk or steering wheel of a car or planted in front of a television than they do engaging in physical activity. According to the American Heart Association, sedentary jobs have increased by 83 percent since 1950, and technology has reduced many people's need to get up and move. Inactivity is taking a considerable toll on public health.

A study from the University of Cambridge equated inactivity with being obese. The Mayo Clinic advises that research has linked sedentary behavior to a host of health concerns, and found those who sat for more than eight hours a day with no physical activity had a risk of dying similar to the risks of fatality linked to obesity and smoking.

Increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, abnormal cholesterol levels, and excess body fat all can be attributed to inactivity.

Mental health can be adversely affected by a sedentary lifestyle as well. Australian researchers surveyed more than 3,300 government employees and found men who sat for more than six hours a day at work were 90 percent more likely to feel moderate psychological distress, such as restlessness, nervousness or hopelessness, than those who sat for less than three hours a day.

In addition, a sedentary lifestyle can significantly increase a person's risk for various types of cancer. A German meta-analysis of 43 studies involving four million people indicated those who sit the most have higher propensities to develop colon cancer, endometrial cancer and lung cancer.

Johns Hopkins Medical Center says research shows that high levels of exercise at some point in the day can lessen some risk, but it's not entirely effective if most of the rest of the day a person is inactive. Risk for cardiovascular disease increases significantly for people who spend 10 hours or more sitting each day.

Various medical organizations recommend individuals get up and move at any opportunity to help reduce risks of inactivity. Erin Michos, M.D., M.H.S., associate director of preventive cardiology at the Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Heart Disease, advises people who are very sedentary to aim for 4,000 steps per day. Such individuals can then build up to a target of 10,000 steps daily.

The Mayo Clinic recommends these strategies to reduce the amount of time you spend sitting:
- Stand while talking on the phone or watching television
- Invest in a standing desk
- Get up from sitting every 30 minutes
- Walk at lunch or during meetings

Sedentary lifestyles can affect health in many negative ways. But there are various ways to get up and go over the course of a typical day.
The COVID-19 pandemic has left many people scrambling for ways to unwind without risking their health or the health of others. For more than a year, opportunities to let loose and have fun have been stymied by the cancellation of concerts, theater shows, sporting events, family holidays, and so much more in the name of public safety. Individuals can look to coping strategies to find silver linings. Pampering oneself can be a healthy and enjoyable endeavor to explore.

Pampering means different things to different people. Pampering involves indulging in self-care strategies to improve mental, physical and emotional health. Pampering can provide a respite from stress, enabling one to switch off his or her brain for a bit. Rest assured that pampering doesn’t have to involve big expenses, and many pampering sessions can take place right at home. The following are five pampering ideas to explore.

1. **Take a nap**
   Getting enough restful sleep is essential for your overall health. The Sleep Foundation says people who work multiple jobs or for extended hours may not have enough time for sufficient sleep, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates one in three American adults do not get enough sleep. Getting seven or more hours of sleep per night is important, but you also can add to your sleep bank by taking short naps in the early afternoon. A nap can reduce stress and elevate the mood. Stick to a snooze of 30 minutes or less.

2. **Indulge in a luxurious practical item**
   Instead of splurging on something that is whimsical or unnecessary, allocate some disposable dollars to something functional— but put a luxurious spin on it. Think of buying a set of silk bedsheets or indulge on a high-end cut of meat for a family dinner. You’ll feel rewarded without feeling guilty that you were wasteful.

3. **Schedule a salon service**
   Hair, nail or skin services enable you to get away from home for an hour or more and devote time all to yourself. Plus, you’ll have the benefit of walking out of the salon looking like the best version of yourself.

4. **Take a hot bath**
   People may be pressed for time when engaging in their daily beauty and grooming routines. A 10-minute shower before work might not provide the relaxation and sense of escape you need. Set aside a time in the evening to soak in the tub and let stress as well as aches and pains melt away in the water. Scent the water with essential oils for a relaxing aromatherapy session.

5. **Find a simple pleasure**
   Display fresh flowers on the table, listen to some favorite music while cleaning the house or plan a homemade meal for yourself accompanied by a fine wine. Planning for a simple pleasure once or twice a week gives you something to look forward to.

Pampering comes in many shapes and forms and is an effective way to reduce stress.
People avoid traditional cow’s milk for many reasons. Some people have ethical concerns about consuming animal products. Individuals may be lactose intolerant or have a milk allergy, while others simply don’t like the taste of cow’s milk. Though it might once have been difficult to find alternatives to cow’s milk at the grocery store, the growing number of people who avoid it has led to something of a boom in dairy alternatives. As a result, it’s now easy for consumers to find various alternatives to cow’s milk when shopping for groceries.

According to the American Society for Nutrition, plant-based milk alternatives like oat milk and pea protein milk bear some interesting similarities and differences to traditional whole milk from cows.

- One cup of oat milk has nearly as many calories as one cup of whole milk, as the ASN notes that the former checks in at 130 calories compared to the 148 calories in one cup of whole milk. The online medical resource Healthline notes the difference in calories is more significant among other popular milk alternatives. For example, one cup of unsweetened almond milk contains just 40 calories, while unsweetened soy milk contains about 80 calories.
- Not surprisingly, the fat content in many milk alternatives is considerably lower than it is in whole milk. The ASN reports that most milk alternatives contain anywhere from 25 to 63 percent of the fat of cow’s milk. For example, one cup of unsweetened rice milk contains just 2 grams of fat compared to the 8 grams found in a single cup of whole milk.
- Most milk alternatives contain significantly less sugar than whole milk. Healthline notes that unsweetened almond milk actually contains zero grams of sugar compared to the 12 grams of sugar found in one cup of whole milk. However, the ASN notes that one cup of oat milk (17 grams) and one cup of hazelnut milk (13 grams) actually contain more sugar than one cup of whole milk.
- Only soybean, pea and flaxseed milk contain as much or more protein as whole milk. Whole milk contains 8 grams of protein, which is the same amount that’s found in pea milk and flaxseed milk. Soybean milk contains 9 grams of protein, while unsweetened almond milk contains 2 grams of protein and unsweetened rice milk contains zero grams of protein.
- One cup of coconut milk (15 micrograms) contains considerably less sodium than one cup of whole milk (105 micrograms).

More information about milk alternatives is available at www.nutrition.org. People considering milk alternatives for purely nutritional purposes can conduct their own research to ensure they’re making the most informed decision possible.
No one is immune to the occasional bad mood. Whether it’s the weather, waking up on the wrong side of the bed or another variable, various factors can have an adverse affect on a person’s mood.

Food is one factor that can have a positive effect on mood. Certain foods have been found to positively affect mood, so incorporating them into your diet may help you stay positive even on those days when you get up on the wrong side of the bed.

- **Fatty fish:** A study from British researchers published in the Archives of General Psychiatry found that a daily dose of an omega-3 fatty acid called eicosapentaenoic acid, or EPA, helped patients with depression significantly reduce their feelings of sadness and pessimism. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that salmon, albacore tuna, sardines, trout, and anchovies are rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

- **Nuts and seeds:** The minerals selenium, copper, magnesium, manganese, and zinc have all been linked to mental health, and nuts are rich in each of those minerals. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, and peanuts are particularly good sources of the immune system-boosting minerals zinc and magnesium.

- **Dark, leafy greens:** Dark, leafy greens like kale, spinach and collards are rich in iron and magnesium, both of which can increase serotonin levels and help reduce feelings of anxiety. Dark, leafy greens also help the body fight inflammation, which can have a positive effect on mood. A 2015 study published in the journal JAMA Psychiatry found that brain inflammation contributed to certain behaviors, including low mood, that appear during major depressive episodes.

- **Dark chocolate:** Chocolate lovers may be happy to learn that dark chocolate can improve mood. A 2009 study published in the Journal of Proteome Research found that dark chocolate helped to reduce levels of the hormone cortisol, which has been linked to stress. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that, when consumed in moderation, dark chocolate made of at least 70 percent cocoa can help people relax.

Various foods can have a beneficial effect on mood, potentially helping people to stay positive when doing so proves challenging.
HEALTH PROBLEMS MEN MAY FACE IN MIDDLE AGE

The human body requires constant upkeep in order for people to maintain their health over the long haul. An encouraging annual physical should inspire people to keep up the good work, while one that uncovers certain issues should spark changes designed to promote optimal health for years to come.

Men who work hard to keep themselves healthy should know that their hard work may not prevent certain issues. That’s especially so for men in middle age, as men’s risk for various conditions increases with age.

High blood pressure/hypertension
Blood vessels naturally become less flexible as the body ages. WebMD notes that this decreased flexibility puts pressure on the system responsible for carrying blood throughout the body. That’s one reason why high blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is more common among aging adults. In fact, Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that even people who do not have hypertension by age 55 to 65 still have a 90 percent chance of developing it at some point. The Mayo Clinic reports that, until age 64, hypertension is more common in men, so middle-aged men should take steps to reduce their risk even if retirement is still a long way off. Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that shedding excess weight, reducing alcohol consumption, becoming more physically active, and reducing stress are just some of the ways adults can reduce their risk for hypertension.

Prostate problems
WebMD notes that the prostate begins to enlarge as men age. In fact, that process slowly begins around age 25. Enlargement of the prostate is known as benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH, and it’s entirely normal. However, around age 50, BPH can begin to produce some uncomfortable side effects. More frequent trips to the bathroom and difficulty with urination may begin around this time, and that’s a result of the prostate growing larger. Various organizations recommend men, beginning around age 40, start speaking to their physicians about their family history in regard to the prostate. Lifestyle changes like cutting back on caffeine and alcohol consumption may help reduce the side effects of an enlarging prostate by decreasing the number of times men must visit the toilet each day.

Heart disease
A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that a growing number of middle-aged Americans are dying from heart disease. Researchers at the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics found that, between 2011 and 2017, the rate of deaths from heart disease for adults between the ages of 45 and 64 increased by 4 percent. The American Heart Association notes that a significant percentage of heart disease cases are linked to obesity, so men in middle age can make a concerted effort to lose weight if they’re already overweight or obese. Middle-aged men who are currently maintaining healthy weights can continue to do what they’re doing while also recognizing that they may need to alter their diets and exercise regimens in the years ahead.

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Hearing is easy to take for granted. Many people are born and grow up without ever experiencing compromised hearing. But that does not mean people, including children, don’t routinely engage in activities that could adversely affect their hearing.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, children are no strangers to recreational activities that can harm their hearing. Children who attend sporting events, musical concerts and even holiday celebrations like fireworks shows may be at risk of losing their hearing. Parents who are careful and cognizant of the many ways noise poses a threat to children, potentially affecting both their physical and psychological health, can put themselves in better position to protect their youngsters from noise-related damage.

What is noise?

The EPA defines noise as any unwanted or disagreeable sound. Noise is sound that can become harmful and interfere with a child’s normal activities. For example, noise can interfere with a child’s ability to sleep and diminish youngsters’ quality of life.

How common are hearing problems among children?

Hearing problems in children may be more common than some parents recognize. The American Academy of Otolaryngology reports that three million children under the age of 18 have some kind of hearing difficulty.

How does noise threaten children?

The EPA notes that noise can affect kids in some surprising ways.
- Noise can affect kids’ development. Repeated exposure to noise during certain developmental periods can affect a child’s ability to acquire language-related skills like reading and listening. In addition, noisy environments, such as noisy homes, can make it hard for children to learn.
- Noise can affect the cardiovascular system. The EPA reports that children who are chronically exposed to loud noise may suffer from elevated blood pressure and other cardiovascular ailments.
- How can parents protect kids from noise?
  Though noise can affect youngsters’ overall health, the experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine note that parents can try various strategies to prevent noise-induced hearing loss.
  - Noise induced hearing loss is preventable. Recognizing the threat noise poses to youngsters’ health is a great first step for parents.
Summer is the most important time of year to practice sun safety. In Montana, our residents like to make the most of the pleasant summer weather by spending as much time outside as they can—hiking, fishing, boating, and enjoying all summer has to offer. That means most of us are also increasing our skin’s exposure to the sun. It’s important to remember that a sunburn or tan is visible skin damage. This sun damage to skin is cumulative, meaning that each sunburn increases your risk of developing skin cancer.

While it’s not feasible to avoid the sun altogether, here are a few important things we can all do to help keep our skin safe and healthy this summer.

**Wear sunscreen!** Sunscreen is essential to overall skin health. It decreases your risk of developing skin cancers and helps prevent premature skin aging. It’s much easier to prevent sun damage than it is to correct sun damage. The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends daily use of an SPF 15 or higher for anyone over the age of 6 months. When outside for an extended period of time, the foundation recommends SPF 30 or higher.

**Apply enough sunscreen!** One ounce of sunscreen is enough to provide coverage for the entire body. Sunscreen needs to be reapplied every two hours or more frequently if you are swimming or sweating heavily. Look for sunscreens that offer “broad spectrum” protection. This means it protects your skin from UVA and UVB rays. There are two different types of sunscreens on the market—chemical and physical. Chemical sunscreens (oxybenzone, octinoxate, homosalate, avobenzone) absorb UV rays while physical sunscreens (zinc oxide, titanium dioxide) act as a shield to UV rays.

**Wear protective clothing!** Sunscreens act as a filter to reduce your chances of skin damage and block about 97 percent of the UV rays that hit your body. What you wear can provide further protection. Clothing with ultraviolet protection (UPF) provides great protection. A wide-brimmed hat can help shade your eyes, ears, face, and neck. Don’t forget UV-blocking sunglasses to add an extra layer of protection around your delicate eye area.

**Avoid excessive exposure during peak hours!** The sun’s rays are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. When possible, plan to be out of direct sunlight during these hours. If that isn’t an option, be diligent about applying and reapplying sunscreen every two hours and wear protective clothing.

**Don’t forget skin exams!** According to The Skin Cancer Foundation, skin cancer is the most common cancer in the world. It is also the most preventable. Early detection is key, so make sure you are performing at-home self-exams looking for any new, changing or unusual spots as well as seeing your dermatologist annually for a professional skin exam.

By taking these steps, you can enjoy the sunshine and beautiful weather while doing your best to avoid damaging your skin. Stay safe this summer!

Gina Morigeau is a Medical Aesthetician at the St. Peter’s Health Plastic Surgery and Medical Aesthetics clinic. Gina began her career as an aesthetician when she graduated from the Montana Academy of Salons, after she received her Bachelor of Arts from Carroll College in 2015.

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Despite the prevalence of diabetes, many people may not be entirely sure what the disease entails. While it's true that diet and exercise are vital to reducing risk for diabetes, some people are born with the disease. In fact, for individuals with type 1 diabetes, the condition is one they must manage throughout their lives.

What is diabetes?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines diabetes as a long-lasting health condition that affects how the body turns food into energy. When a person eats food, much of that food is broken down into glucose and released into the bloodstream. Under normal conditions, when blood sugar levels rise, the pancreas will release insulin, which unlocks the abilities of that blood sugar so the body's cells can use it for energy. Individuals with diabetes do not make enough insulin or can't use the insulin as they should. Cells sometimes stop responding to insulin. In each of these instances, too much blood sugar stays in the bloodstream, leading to serious health problems.

Types of diabetes

Doctors have identified three main types of diabetes: Type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes. About 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes have type 2, which is when the body doesn't use insulin well, says the CDC. Typically, a healthy lifestyle or lifestyle changes can help prevent type 2 diabetes. Gestational diabetes is an often temporary form of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy. Type 1 diabetes, though rare, may be most concerning because it is thought to be an autoimmune condition. Also, it must be managed throughout life.

Type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is a chronic condition that occurs because the pancreas produces little or no insulin. Very often it appears during childhood or adolescence, which is why it was once known as juvenile diabetes. Some experts think the body attacks itself by mistake, resulting in the body's cessation of insulin production.

Type 1 diabetes has no cure. Treatments are designed to manage blood sugar levels and prevent complications. Over time, type 1 diabetes complications can affect major organs like the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart. That is why moderating blood sugar levels is crucial.

Most type 1 diabetes patients try to balance their bodies' glucose and insulin demands through measured diets, testing and daily insulin injections. The American Diabetes Association says diabetes technology continues to evolve, and blood glucose meters and continuous glucose monitoring systems have made testing more convenient and comfortable. CGMs work through a sensor placed on the skin. They monitor and report on glucose in real time and alert when the glucose rises or lowers to certain predetermined limits. They are often preferred by those with type 1 diabetes to reduce finger pricks throughout the day. Furthermore, insulin pumps and other devices are easier to use and less invasive. They can deliver insulin continuously to keep levels even.

Type 1 diabetes must be carefully managed to promote good health. With education, most people can live comfortably with diabetes.
Improving one's overall health and maintaining that health over the long haul can have a profound impact on quality of life. For example, the Harvard Medical School notes that regular exercise can slow the natural decline in physical performance that occurs as people age. That means routine exercise can serve as something like a fountain of youth that allows people to keep their cardiovascular fitness, metabolism and muscle function on par with their younger counterparts.

When attempting to improve long-term health, it's important that people emphasize mental health as much as they do their physical health. The Anxiety & Depression Association of America notes the importance and effectiveness of preventive efforts in relation to depression and anxiety. In regard to mental health, prevention efforts can function in much the same way that exercise serves physical health. Routine exercise helps people to maintain healthy weights, reducing their risk for various conditions and diseases. Preventive efforts designed to improve mental health can significantly reduce a person's risk for anxiety and depression.

Various techniques and strategies can be utilized to promote mental health, and these three are simple and highly effective.

1. **Get enough sleep.** According to the Primary Care Collaborative, a not-for-profit member organization dedicated to advancing an effective and efficient health system, sleep and mental health are intimately related. Sleep loss can contribute to emotional instability. The amygdala is the part of the brain responsible for humans' emotional responses. When an individual does not get enough sleep, his or her amygdala goes into overdrive, leading to more intense emotional reactions. The prefrontal cortex is another part of the brain that needs sufficient sleep to function properly. Without it, the prefrontal cortex, which is integral to impulse control, cannot function properly. Adults can speak with their physicians about how much sleep they should be getting each night. Those needs change as individuals age.

2. **Eat a balanced diet.** A balanced, healthy diet doesn't just benefit the waistline. According to the ADAA, a balanced diet that includes protein, healthy non-saturated fats, fiber, and some simple carbohydrates can reduce the likelihood that mental health issues like fatigue, difficulty concentrating and irritability will arise during the day.

3. **Volunteer in your community.** A 2020 study published in the Journal of Happiness Studies found that people who volunteered in the past were more satisfied with their lives and rated their overall health as much better than people who didn't volunteer. Perhaps the most noteworthy finding in the study was that people who began volunteering with lower levels of well-being tended to get the biggest boost from volunteering. Volunteer- ing provides opportunities to socialize, which can help ward off the loneliness that can sometimes contribute to anxiety and depression. Mental health is important, and protecting it should be part of everyone's health care regimen.

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