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## Did you know...

Though women may notice various signs and symptoms that could be indicative of breast cancer, breast pain is generally not one of them. The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.® notes that there are various harmless causes of breast pain, such as puberty, menstruation and child birth, but that breast pain is not commonly a symptom of cancer.

However, in rare instances breast pain may correlate with cancer. For example, breast tumors may cause pain, but cancerous tumors are not generally reported as painful. Though it may not be linked to breast cancer, breast pain should still be reported to a physician immediately, advises the NBCF.

## Breast cancer signs and symptoms

**B**reast cancer is a formidable foe. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 627,000 women lost their lives to breast cancer in 2018.

But women are not helpless in the fight against breast cancer, as the WHO notes early detection is critical and could potentially save thousands of lives each year.

A proactive approach is a key component of protecting oneself against breast cancer.

While the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.® notes that many breast cancer symptoms are invisible and not noticeable without a professional cancer screening, women can keep an eye out for certain signs of breast cancer they might be able to detect on their own.

Monthly self-exams can help women more easily identify changes in their breasts.

During such self-exams, women can look for the following signs and symptoms and



are advised to report any abnormalities they discover to their physicians immediately.

### CHANGES IN HOW THE BREAST OR NIPPLE FEELS

The NBCF says nipple tenderness or a lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm could indicate the presence of breast cancer.

Some women may notice changes in the skin texture or an enlargement of the pores in the skin of their breast.

In many instances, skin texture has been described as being similar to the texture of an orange peel.

Lumps in the breast also may indicate breast cancer, though not all

lumps are cancerous.

### CHANGE IN APPEARANCE OF THE BREAST OR NIPPLE

Unexplained changes in the size or shape of the breast; dimpling anywhere on the breast; unexplained swelling or shrinking of the breast, particularly when the shrinking or swelling is exclusive to one side only; and a nipple that is turned slightly inward or inverted are some signs and symptoms of breast cancer that can affect the appearance of the breast or nipple.

It is common for women's breasts to be asymmetrical, but sudden asymmetry should be brought to the attention of a physician.

### NIPPLE DISCHARGE

The NBCF notes that any discharge from the nipple, but particularly a clear or bloody discharge, could be a sign of breast cancer.

Milky discharge when they are not breastfeeding is not linked to breast cancer but should be discussed with a physician.

## Potential treatment options after a breast cancer diagnosis

**A** breast cancer diagnosis is something no one wants to receive. But the burden of breast cancer is substantial.

Upon being diagnosed with breast cancer, patients will be educated about a host of potential treatment options. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that breast cancer is treated in several

ways, and the course of treatment a doctor recommends will depend on the kind of breast cancer and how far it has spread.

In addition, according to Breastcancer.org, breast cancer is made up of many different kinds of cancer cells, which often necessitates the use of various types of treatments to get rid of the cancer.

The following are

some treatment options:

### SURGERY

Breastcancer.org notes that surgery is typically the first line of attack. The CDC says the goal of surgery is to cut out cancer tissue. Some common breast cancer surgeries include lumpectomy, in which the tumor and a small amount of surrounding tissue is removed, and

mastectomy, in which all of the breast tissue is removed.

### CHEMOTHERAPY

Chemotherapy is used to treat various types of cancer and involves the administration of special medicines to shrink or kill existing cancer cells. Breastcancer.org notes that chemotherapy is sometimes administered prior to surgery in an attempt to shrink

the cancer.

### RADIATION THERAPY

Radiation therapy aims to kill cancer cells using high-energy rays. Sometimes referred to as "radiotherapy," radiation therapy is overseen by a radiation oncologist.

### HORMONAL THERAPY

Estrogen makes hormone-receptor-positive breast cancers grow, and hormonal therapy,

which may be referred to as "anti-estrogen" therapy, aims to reduce the amount of estrogen in the body and block its action on breast cancer cells.

### TARGETED THERAPIES

These therapies target specific characteristics of the cancer cells.

Cancer cells can have many characteristics, so there are various types of targeted therapies.

# Debunking common myths associated with breast cancer



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**C**ancer claims the lives of millions of people across the globe every year. But the fight against cancer is anything but hopeless, as the World Health Organization notes that between 30 and 50 percent of all cancer cases are preventable.

Learning about cancer is one of the best ways for people to protect themselves from this deadly disease.

Researchers continue to learn more about cancer everyday and routinely discover that information once thought to be accurate was actually off-base.

Despite researchers' best efforts, some myths about cancer still prevail.

Some of these myths are about cancer in general, while others refer to specific cancers, including breast cancer.

Myths about breast cancer can be as harmful as accurate information is helpful, so learning the truth and debunking those myths can be an important part of women's preventive approach to breast cancer.

#### MYTH

*Drinking milk increases your risk for breast cancer.*

The American Cancer Society notes that early studies raised concerns

that drinking milk from cows treated with hormones could increase a person's risk for breast cancer.

However, ensuing research failed to find a clear link between the two.

In fact, a 2002 study published in the International Journal of Epidemiology found no significant association between dairy fluid intake and breast cancer risk.

#### MYTH

*Lumps indicate breast cancer.*

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.<sup>®</sup> says that only a small percentage of breast lumps turn out to be cancer.

However, abnormalities or changes in breast tissue should always be brought to the attention of a physician.

#### MYTH

*Mammograms cause breast cancer to spread.*

This myth is rooted in the incorrect notion that breast compression while getting a mammogram causes the cancer to spread.

However, the NBCF insists that cannot happen.

In fact, the National Cancer Institute touts the benefits of mammograms while the ACS

recommends women between the ages of 45 and 54 get mammograms every year.

For additional breast cancer screening guidelines, visit the ACS at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

#### MYTH

*Women with a family history of breast cancer are likely to develop breast cancer, too.*

This myth is dangerous because, if taken at face value, it can give women with no family history of breast cancer a false sense of security.

However, the NBCF notes that only about 10 percent of individuals diagnosed with breast cancer have a family history of the disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that a woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she has a first-degree relative, including a mother, sister, daughter, or even a male family member, who have had the disease.

But breast cancer can affect anyone, regardless of their family history.

Information is a valuable asset in the fight against breast cancer.

Learning to decipher between accurate and false information can be especially valuable.

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## Did you know?

People looking for a good cardiovascular or aerobic exercise may not need to invest in a gym membership or treadmill.

According to Rally Health®, a digital health experience that helps you make simple changes in your daily routine, walking can be an effective cardio exercise if one goes at a brisk pace of at least three miles per hour.

Walking at this pace can effectively push the heart and lungs to work hard without adversely affecting the joints in the way that other aerobic exercises might.

Harvard Health says that walking of any kind can help people maintain healthy weights, lower their risk for various diseases, keep blood pressure in check, lift mood, and strengthen bones.

A number of studies also show that walking can help people improve memory and avoid age-related memory loss.



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# Banish belly fat and improve cardiovascular health

**T**he way to a person's heart may be through his or her stomach in more ways than one.

Doctors have tied heart health to the abdomen, and having extra pounds around one's middle can be detrimental to cardiovascular well-being.

Excess visceral fat in the belly, something doctors refer to as "central adiposity," may have potentially dangerous consequences. While the link between belly fat and heart health has long been associated with men, women may be even more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of belly fat.

A study published in March 2018 in the Journal of the American Heart Association examined 500,000 people between the ages of 40 and 69.

Participants had their body measurements taken, and then were kept track of for heart attack occurrence over the next seven years.

During that period, the women who carried more weight around their middles (measured by waist circumference, waist-to-hip ratio or waist-to-height ratio) had a 10 to 20 percent greater risk of heart attack than



women who were just heavier over all.

Belly fat is particularly dangerous because it doesn't just include the insulating, or subcutaneous, fat under the skin.

It is largely visceral fat that also surrounds the organs in the abdomen.

Harvard Medical School reports that visceral fat is metabolically active and has been strongly linked to a host of serious diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and dementia.

Visceral fat is like an endocrine organ that secretes hormones and a host of other chemicals linked to diseases that can affect adults.

One substance is called retinol-binding protein 4 (RBP4), which

has been tied to an increased risk of coronary heart disease.

In 2015, a study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine found that normal-weight people with excessive belly fat had a higher risk of dying of heart disease or any other cause compared with people without central obesity.

The online health and wellness resource Medical News Today says doctors determine belly fat to be a problem when a woman's waist measures 35 inches or more and a man's 40 inches or more.

MRIs also can be used as a fat analyzer and will be judged on a scale of 1 to 59.

A measurement of 13 and under is desirable. The Mayo Clinic

advises that poor diet and fitness habits can contribute to belly fat.

As people age, they may have to make more drastic changes to their diets and exercise regimens to counteract changes in their metabolisms.

Eliminating sugary beverages, watching portion sizes, counting calories, doing moderate aerobic activity daily, and choosing healthier foods can help tame visceral fat.

Also, doctors may recommend those who are stressed to try stress-busting techniques, as stress also may be tied to excessive belly fat.

Belly fat should not be overlooked, as its presence can greatly increase a person's risk for various diseases.

# Avoid medication errors with these tips

**P**rescription medications are a necessity for many people.

The American Academy of Family Physicians says that, each week, four out of five adults in the United States will use prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs and/or various supplements.

Approximately one-third of adults take five or more medications at the same time.

The potential for adverse drug events is elevated when people are taking multiple medications at one time. For example, mixing pills

has the potential to cause serious injury or even death.

Doctors, patients and pharmacies must work together to ensure that medication is taken safely. One of the best ways to prevent errors with medications is for patients to take an active role in their health care management.

## **KNOW YOUR DOSE**

Children are at an especially high risk for medication errors because they require different doses than adults, offers the Mayo Clinic. Adults of different weights who share



medications can run into trouble as well. A minor error in regard to dosage can potentially cause a big problem.

## **FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR DOCTOR**

Certain medications can cause side effects that only can be noticed

by lab testing, such as an impact to the liver.

Doctors also may be under an obligation to follow up with patients taking psychological drugs to ensure the efficacy of treatment. Make sure you keep all follow-up appointments.

## **MAINTAIN A CURRENT LIST OF MEDS**

It is up to patients to share information with prescribing doctors regarding any and all products being taken to avoid harmful interactions. Using the same pharmacy for all prescriptions also is helpful.

## **BE HONEST ABOUT HEIGHT AND WEIGHT**

Medication labeling and package inserts typically use metric units to correlate dose to a person's physical attributes. Individuals should know their information in metric

measurements and be honest with themselves about what they weigh.

## **USE MEDICATIONS CORRECTLY**

It is important not to chew nonchewable pills or cut pills unless the pharmacist or doctor has said it is safe to do so. Accurate dosing also requires using the right spoon or syringe, not silverware. Store certain types of medications, such as eye drops and ear drops, separately so they're not mistaken for one another.

These are just some of the ways to prevent medication errors.

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## 5 ways to protect against hearing loss

**A** certain degree of hearing loss can be a normal part of the aging process.

However, people who take steps to protect their hearing long before Father Time takes his toll can prevent the extreme hearing loss suffered by millions of seniors across the globe.

John's Hopkins Medicine states that approximately 15 percent of adults aged 18 years and older report some difficulty hearing and up to 39 percent of adults in their sixties have hearing problems.

Lost hearing cannot be restored, though hearing aids and other devices can help people with hearing loss hear better.

Hearing aids are not always an accessory people look forward to needing, so it's good to know that a few simple strategies can protect people's hearing over the long haul.

### 1. GET A BASELINE HEARING EXAM

Speak with an audiologist, who can test your hearing and establish a baseline level against which future tests will be measured.

This way it is easier to see if hearing loss is increasing over time.



### 2. TURN DOWN THE VOLUME

Audio devices can contribute to hearing loss. Earbuds are particularly dangerous because they fit directly next to the eardrum. The World Health Organization says that 1.1 billion teens and young adults worldwide are at risk for noise-induced hearing loss from unsafe use of audio devices. Set the maximum volume on audio devices below 60 percent and wear headphones for no more than an hour a day.

Keeping music low on other devices is also advisable.

### 3. WEAR PROTECTIVE GEAR

Protective gear includes ear plugs and protective earphones. This gear should be worn whenever you expect to encounter loud noises, such as when you mow the lawn, go hunting or shooting,

attend rock concerts, or visit construction sites.

### 4. LIMIT USE OF COTTON SWABS

Ear wax is beneficial to the ears and can stop dust and other particles from entering the ear. Furthermore, using a cotton swab can potentially cause damage to sensitive organs in the ear if they are inserted too far or too roughly, advises the hearing testing service Ear-Q.

### 5. AVOID LOUD NOISES

Steer clear of fireworks, noisy city centers, loud performances, and other situations if you do not have hearing protection.

Remember, hearing loss often doesn't produce immediate symptoms or pain. Over time, hearing loss can become noticeable.

A proactive approach can help people avoid significant hearing loss as they age.



# Blood cancers and their effects on the body

**C**ancers can affect various parts of the human body.

While it is common to think of cancer forming in a particular organ, the cells in blood are no more impervious to cancer mutations than those elsewhere in the body.

Hematologic cancers affect the production and function of blood cells. Cancer Treatment Centers of America says that most blood cancers originate in the bone marrow, where blood is produced. What makes hematologic cancers so imposing is, unlike cancers that may affect only one area, blood cells are involved in just about every process of the body. Blood plays an essential role in the immune system by producing cells to fight off infection.

The American Society of Hematology states that blood stem cells will develop into red blood cells, white blood cells or platelets. With most blood cancers, abnormal blood cells prevent the blood from fighting off infection or preventing serious bleeding. Blood cancers are broken down into three main types

## LEUKEMIA

This is a type of cancer found in the blood and bone marrow that is caused by a rapid production of abnormal



white blood cells.

These cells are not able to fight infection, and they can impair the ability of the bone marrow to produce red blood cells and platelets. The most commonly diagnosed leukemias, according to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, are chronic lymphocytic leukemia, acute myeloid leukemia and acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

## LYMPHOMA

In this blood cancer, the lymphatic system responsible for removing excess fluids from the body and producing immune cells is affected. Lymphocytes are white blood cells that fight infection. When they are compromised by cancer, they become lymphoma cells that collect in the lymph nodes and other tissues, impairing the immune system, offers AHS. Non-Hodgkin's

lymphoma is one of the more commonly diagnosed lymphomas.

## MYELOMA

This is a cancer that begins in the plasma, a type of white blood cell that fights infection through the production of antibodies, offers

CTCA. Myeloma weakens the body and makes it susceptible to infection. Multiple myeloma is a common form of the disease.

Although the causation of these blood cancers varies, very often people afflicted with these cancers experience similar symptoms.

These can include night sweats, bone/joint pain, shortness of breath, frequent infections, and abdominal discomfort.

Treatment can be affected by various factors, including the type of cancer, a patient's age, how fast the cancer is growing, and if any spreading has occurred.

Stem cell transplantation through bone marrow collection, circulat-

ing blood and umbilical cord blood can be a promising treatment.

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy also are used. Blood transfusions may be necessary. In addition, target-

ed therapies for the disease are now being studied in clinical trials at the Center for Hematologic Oncology at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center.

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# Games that can challenge the brain

**G**ames are as popular as ever. For evidence of that, one need look no further than his or her own smartphone.

The number of hours people spend playing games on their smartphones might surprise even the most ardent players.

Games might be seen as a way to unwind, but some games can potentially do more than merely provide a way to escape the daily

grind.

Brain teasers, riddles and crossword puzzles are just some of the types of games that can help people engage and challenge their brains while still providing a bit of escapism.

A Healthier Michigan, which is sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield Michigan and aims to help locals adopt healthier lifestyles, notes that the following exercises, games and platforms can help men and women challenge

their brains in unique ways.

## **BRAINHQ**

According to Posit Science, which created the system, BrainHQ (www.aarp.brainhq.com) is a system of training the brain that was developed by neuroscientists and other brain experts.

The platform includes various brain training exercises with hundreds of levels that can help people improve their brain func-

tion, including memory and retention.

## **WRITING IN THE STAR**

Similar to a crossword puzzle, this game provides a list of nine words to users, who must then find the six words that connect to from a six-point star before they can move on the next level.

Available at www.happy-neuron.com, Writing in the Stars aims to help users improve their logical reasoning.

## **PRIVATE EYE**

With a goal of helping users improve their focused attention and concentration, Private Eye (www.happy-neuron.com) asks players to peruse a grid full of intricate layers and symbols in an effort to find the item that does not belong.

## **BRAINGLE**

With more than 200,000 members, Braingle (www.braingle.com) is a popular online community where users

can go to access brain teasers, trivia quizzes, IQ tests, and more.

Users even rank the games, allowing novices to find games that might help them hone certain skills or ease their way into challenging their brains with games.

Millions of people across the globe play games every day.

Though puzzles often play games to have fun, they might be helping their brains without even knowing it.

## How puzzles promote health and wellness

Puzzles are fun and entertaining, but their benefits go beyond simple recreation. In fact, playing and solving puzzles on a regular basis can benefit adults and children in various ways.

Puzzles often stimulate problem-solving centers in the brain and can improve brain health. Researchers have found that, by completing crossword puzzles, playing challenging games or doing other puzzle-related activities,

individuals may be less likely to develop brain plaques that have been tied to Alzheimer's disease. Data published in the Archives of Neurology found a distinct

connection between people who exercised their minds with stimulating activities in their early and middle years and brain health. This group had less Beta-amyloid protein uptake in their brains, which is linked to the onset of Alzheimer's, than those who didn't engage in puzzles during the same time frame.

Beyond their health benefits, puzzles offer some additional perks.

### **PUZZLES BOOST VOCABULARY**

Puzzles such as crosswords or code-words/cryptograms introduce people to new words. This helps people expand their

vocabulary and can help them improve their spelling.

### **PUZZLES TEACH PATIENCE**

Puzzles can be challenging, and such challenges can promote patience in regard to approaching and realizing goals.

### **PUZZLES CAN REINFORCE LESSONS**

Teaching through puzzle play is an effective way to tap into memory retention while making lessons fun.

### **PUZZLES MAY IMPROVE INTELLIGENCE**

Engaging in puzzles can force players to think and reason using general knowledge,

memory, spatial imagery, and logic. These skills help to sharpen intellect over time. Researchers at the University of Michigan even found that adults could boost their IQs by four points after spending 25 minutes a day doing puzzles.

### **PUZZLES REINFORCE CONCENTRATION**

Concentration is required to find words hidden in a word search puzzle or to solve a brainteaser. According to data on SelfGrowth.com, puzzles naturally induce a state of creative, focused meditation.

Puzzles improve visual-spatial reasoning.



When solving a jigsaw puzzle or working one's way through a maze, players have to look at different shapes and figure out where they fit within the larger picture. Better visual-spatial skills can help with

packing, driving and using a map and can be valuable career tools in fields such as architecture.

Puzzles are a fun recreational activity that also can boost brain health.

# Chiropractors can help with various ailments

Anyone who has experienced pain understands that it can be debilitating. Pain can make it challenging to manage everyday tasks and can affect relationships and physical and mental health in many ways. Pain medications were once the norm, but with the rise of the opioid epidemic, it may be wise to take a different approach to pain treatment.

While opioid use for pain does not always lead to abuse of these medications, opioid addiction has become a widespread problem across North America.

Chiropractic care may be one avenue to pursue as a viable alternative to pain medications. While chiropractic manipulations are most often associated with back and neck pain, there are many different benefits — some of which may surprise those unfamiliar with chiropractic care - for this type of care.

## MIGRAINES AND HEADACHES

Research shows that spinal manipulation can be an effective way to treat migraines, tension headaches and headaches that begin in the neck. In clinical trials conducted at Macquarie University, 72 percent of migraine sufferers



had noticeable or substantial improvement after a period of chiropractic treatment.

## ACCIDENT INJURIES

Chiropractors can assess musculoskeletal anomalies caused by motor vehicle accidents as well as slips and falls. Whiplash is a common issue in car crashes, and this may be addressed by a chiropractor.

## ANXIETY AND STRESS

The fight or flight mechanism that is activated when a person experiences stress and anxiety can take its toll on various parts of the body.

Because stress involves nerve impulses, chiropractors may be able to work primarily with the spine where these impulses originate to help release tension and nerve irritation. In addition, adjustments can improve blood circulation, which may help signal the brain

to turn off its “rally to action” response to stressful situations.

## FIBROMYALGIA

Fibromyalgia is marked by widespread musculoskeletal pain in the joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. It can be combined with temporomandibular joint syndrome, or TMJ, as well as irritable bowel syndrome, among other illnesses. Chiropractors can remove subluxations, which are misalignments of the vertebrae in the spine and joints that lead to pain responses. A Florida State University study found that those with fibromyalgia who combined resistance training with chiropractic treatment two times a week saw improvements in their symptoms.

Chiropractic care may be an asset for pain management, as well as a way to improve overall health.

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