

# HealthConnection

GOOD NEIGHBOR PHARMACY

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THIS MONTH'S  
Featured Article

**YOUR CHOICES MATTER**

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## Senior Health Update Smart Reminders for Taking Your Medications

One of the most important things you can do to take care of yourself is to take your doctor's advice and take your medicine as prescribed. This is sometimes easier said than done. This is especially true if one needs to take many different medications at different times of the day.

Some ideas to help you remember to take your medications when you are supposed to include:

- **Pill Boxes.** Organize your plastic pills in pill boxes that can be found at most pharmacies.
- **Smartphone Apps.** These can help you remember and track your meds.
- **Calendar Alerts.** Mark daily doses and times on a piece of paper or on your computer's calendar.
- **Tie Taking Medications into a Daily Activity.** This can be a powerful reminder. Remembering to take your meds might become as easy as, say, brushing your teeth.

Source: Drugs.com; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Hot Topics

# What Are the Signs of Stress?

Stress can affect your body, your mood and your behavior. Being able to recognize common stress symptoms can give you a jump on dealing with them. Stress that is not managed can contribute to many health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Here are some common effects of stress on your body:

- Headache
- Muscle tension or pain
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Change in sex drive
- Stomach upset
- Sleep problems

Your thoughts and feelings can contribute to a higher stress level. Stress can also manifest itself in actions that are detrimental to your well-being. Some of these include:

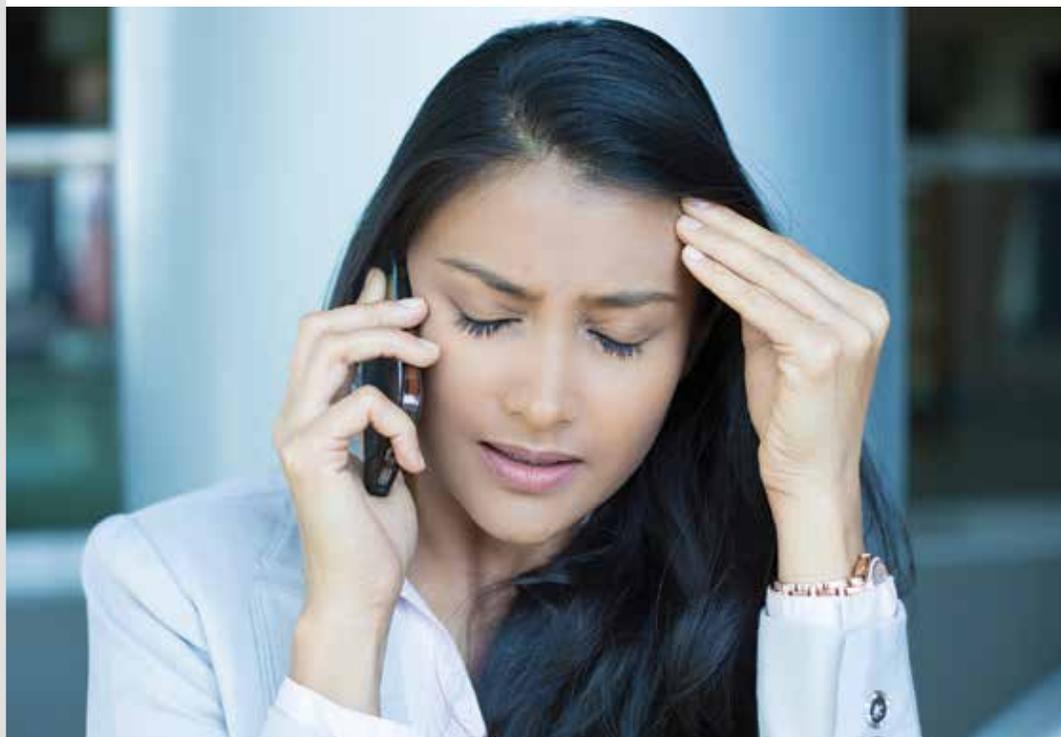
- Eating too little or too much
- Angry outbursts
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Tobacco use
- Social withdrawal
- Exercising less often

Stress is not a problem only for adults. Children often feel a lot of stress. Parents can play a key role in helping identify and manage their kids' stress. They can make sure that children know that they can approach them when worried, and should also keep an eye out for signs of anxiety. Here are some symptoms that may indicate that a child is stressed:

- Decreased appetite
- Headaches
- Trouble sleeping
- Bedwetting
- Upset stomach or abdominal pain
- Inability to relax
- Aggressiveness or stubbornness
- Inability to control emotions
- Unwillingness to engage in family or school activities

Family routines, such as family dinners or game and movie nights, can help relieve children's stress, as can spending calm, relaxing time together. Parents shouldn't hesitate to ask their pediatrician or a therapist for help managing their child's stress if symptoms don't seem to be improving.

Sources: Mayo Clinic; National Sleep Foundation





## Heart Health Update Your Choices Matter

A healthy diet and lifestyle, along with making smart healthcare decisions, can be a pathway to a healthier heart. Your family history can have some impact on your chances of heart disease, but there are some simple steps one can follow that, if you stick to them, can offer long-term heart-health benefits.

The American Heart Association notes that a heart-healthy diet should include:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy products
- Skinless poultry and fish
- Nuts and legumes
- Non-tropical vegetable oils

Limit saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, red meat, sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages. If you choose to eat red meat, select lean cuts.

Use up at least as many calories as you take in. Find out how many calories you should be eating and drinking to maintain your weight. Nutrition and calorie information on food labels is typically based on a 2,000-calorie diet. You may need fewer or more calories depending on your age, gender and level of physical activity. Control your calories through portion control. Eat until you are comfortably full but not stuffed. If you eat out, this can lead to yummy leftovers.

Lifestyle choices are important. Smoking significantly increases your chance for heart disease. Try to avoid even secondhand smoke. Avoid drinking too much alcohol. This can raise your blood pressure and increase your risk of heart disease.

Regular exercise can help you maintain your weight, keep off weight that you lose and help you gain greater cardiovascular fitness. Each week, try to get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity, 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity or an equal combination of both.

If you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes, you can take steps to lower your risk for heart disease. These can be diet or lifestyle changes and/or medications prescribed by your doctor. But first you need to get checked out. A routine physical tests for all of these heart risk factors so one can find out about these conditions with one doctor appointment. Your healthcare provider should test your blood levels of cholesterol at least once every five years. If you have already been diagnosed with high cholesterol or have a family history of the condition, you may need to have your cholesterol checked more frequently.

Source: American Heart Association; Centers for Disease Control

## To-Do List Are Your Medications and Supplements Expired?

Expired medications can be less effective or even risky due to a change in chemical composition or a decrease in strength. Also, certain expired medications are at risk of bacterial growth. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is very clear: If a medicine is expired, you shouldn't use it.

Expired medicines sitting in a home medicine cabinet are highly susceptible to being stolen and misused. Studies show that many abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends. Having expired medicines around is not just a risk to the person for whom they were prescribed. If taken by mistake, children and pets can be injured.

Properly disposing of unneeded and expired medicines is important. Follow any specific disposal instructions that may be listed on the label. Do not flush them down the toilet. Ask your pharmacist. If available in your area, a drug take-back program is the preferred way to dispose of expired, unwanted or unused medicine.

Source: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration



## Moms' Corner

### Monitoring Your Child's Online Behavior

Kids' easy access to online technology is a fact of life these days for many families. There can be many benefits, such as accessing educational information and connecting with friends, that previous generations did not have. But with those benefits comes a concern about your kids' safety, privacy with personal information and cyberbullying.

Monitoring and guiding your child's behavior is part of being a parent. It should be no different with your child's online behavior. There are many ways this can be done. Oftentimes, a child has access to a computer well before he or she can go online with a smartphone. It is always a good idea to make sure that online computer use is done in a more public place in the home. Other suggestions:

- Check which websites your child has visited.
- Check your child's social-media profile.
- Tell your child you will be periodically looking through his or her phone calls/texts.
- Use parental controls for online use that can block, filter or report on your child's online activities.

Source: Pew Research Center



## Kids' Health

### How Long Should My Child Use a Car Seat?

Car crashes are a leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 13. If they are the right age and size for it, protect your kids by using a car seat or booster seat every time they ride in a car.

The first car seat for your child should be rear-facing. Always have the car seat in the back seat. It's best to keep your child in the rear-facing car seat until the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat's manufacturer is reached. You then should graduate to a car seat that faces forward. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration notes that this can be anywhere from ages 4 to 7, after which the child should be placed in a booster seat (again, always in the back seat).

Graduating out of the booster seat to sitting in the car's seat, using only the car's belt system, could take place as late as a child's 13th birthday and should take place when the following questions are answered with a "yes":

- Can your child sit straight against the back of the car's seat?
- Can your child's legs bend at the knee on the edge of the seat?
- Can your child sit comfortably in the seat without slouching?
- Does the lap portion of the seat belt lay across your child's hips, touching the thighs?
- Does the shoulder belt stay at the center of your child's shoulder, crossing the collarbone?

Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Kentucky Office of Highway Safety

For additional articles on kids' health, visit [MyGNP.com](http://MyGNP.com).



## Health News You Can Use

### Tips to Fall Asleep Fast

Nearly one in five people suffers from occasional insomnia. These tips can help you get to sleep faster and sleep more soundly:

- Starting four to six hours before going to bed, avoid coffee, tea and other stimulants.
- Avoid smoking before bedtime or during the night.
- Avoid heavy meals and spicy foods right before bedtime.
- Get physical exercise during the day, but avoid exercise right before going to bed.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark and not too hot or too cold.

To improve your ability to sleep more readily, create a strong association between your bed and sleep. Also, keeping a fixed schedule can help. For example:

- Only go to bed when you feel tired.
- Get up from bed if you are having difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Only use your bed for sleeping or sex, not for reading, watching TV or eating.
- Get up at the same time each morning.

Limit the time you spend in bed to the time when you are actually asleep. Over the span of a couple weeks, keep a sleep diary to get your average sleeping time. Add half an hour to account for the time between going to bed and actually falling asleep. The best time for you to go to sleep is then calculated backwards, from when you intend to wake up. For instance, if your alarm is set for 6:00 a.m. and you need six hours of sleep, when you add on the half hour to fall asleep, then you should go to bed at 11:30 p.m.

Source: National Institutes of Health



## Health Q&A

### How Can I Stop Athlete's Foot

**Q: What can I do to treat or avoid getting athlete's foot?**

**A:** Athlete's foot is a skin disease caused by a fungus that most commonly attacks the feet because shoes create a warm, dark and moist environment that encourages fungus growth. The warmth and dampness found in showers and locker rooms can also be a breeding ground.

If you get athlete's foot, there are many anti-fungal treatments available over the counter. Active anti-fungal ingredients such as miconazole nitrate or tolnaftate are common among sprays and ointments available at your pharmacy.

You can help prevent athlete's foot by practicing good foot hygiene and taking these steps:

- Wash feet daily with soap and water, drying them carefully, especially between the toes.
- Avoid walking barefoot in wet and warm places. Use shower shoes in public showers.
- Reduce perspiration by using an over-the-counter foot powder.
- Wear light and airy shoes.
- Change shoes and socks regularly to decrease moisture.
- Wear synthetic-blend socks that wick away moisture, and change them frequently if you perspire heavily.

Source: American Podiatric Medical Association

Do you have more questions?  
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for more information.

*Eat Smart*

# Savory Winter Soups Help Beat Winter Weight Gain

The media often talks about Americans gaining a lot of weight in the winter, especially during the holiday season, often noting that it is not unusual for people to gain up to 10 pounds over the course of the season. Research suggests that winter weight gain is real but not as bad as some folks would lead you to believe. On average, it's about a pound during the winter and holiday months.

Any weight gain is difficult to lose, and over the years, this could add up to a significant problem. Part of a strategy to lose weight, or not gain weight in the first place, is to eat more healthy foods with fewer calories. Winter and holiday menus often include "comfort food." Comfort food does not have to be high in calories and fat. Replace your grandmother's mac and cheese with a savory soup or stew.

Comfort food also does not have to take hours in the kitchen to prepare. Making homemade chicken or tortilla soup using canned ingredients (such as corn, black beans and diced tomatoes with green chili peppers) and a rotisserie chicken from your grocery store can be a low-calorie comforter on a cold winter's evening.

Source: National Institutes of Health





### *Living with Diabetes*

## Handling Insulin Injectors at Work

If you have diabetes, you know how challenging it can be to manage your disease. One of those challenges involves learning how to treat your condition in the workplace in a safe and private manner.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to provide “reasonable accommodations” to enable employees with disabilities to enjoy equal employment opportunities unless doing so would cause a significant difficulty or expense. Depending on the needs of the individual, these accommodations can vary. Here are some ways employers accommodate employees who have diabetes:

- Allowances are made for breaks to eat or drink, take medication or test blood-sugar levels.

- A private area is provided to test blood-sugar levels or to administer insulin injections.
- A private area is provided for employees who need to rest until blood-sugar levels return to normal.

Handling and disposing of insulin injectors in the workplace is an important part of keeping everyone safe. Insulin injectors are part of a group of tools called “sharps” that include needles, syringes and lancets (or “fingersticks”) used as a means to get blood for blood-sugar tests, auto injectors (for insulin or epinephrine), and other devices used to treat diabetes and other conditions that need maintenance by injection of medications.

One of the most common ways that employers accommodate diabetic employees is to provide ready access to a sharps disposal container in the workplace. FDA-approved containers are common, have a tight-fitting lid and are made of puncture-resistant plastic with leak-resistant sides and bottom.

Employers should designate staff to monitor the fill level of the sharps container to make sure it is not overfilled, prohibit employees from putting non-sharps items in the container and ensure that all staff know how to properly use the container. Doing so can lead to a healthier work environment.

Sources: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; U.S. Food and Drug Administration; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health



## Keep Your Heart Healthy!

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