

# HEALTH CONNECTION

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE

MAKING SENSE  
OF LABELS

DANGERS OF  
DISTRACTED  
DRIVING

## Winter Health GUIDE



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MEDICAL CENTER

## DON'T BE BLUE: *Frozen Is Fine*



Love blueberries and want to eat them year-round, but you're worried that frozen fruit may pack less of an antioxidant punch? Don't be. A recent study found freezing preserves the fruit's healthy qualities, while water leaching out into ice crystals actually increases the concentration of antioxidants.

Anthocyanin — the antioxidant that gives blueberries their color — helps your body reduce cell damage. So mix a handful of fresh or frozen blueberries into your cereal, smoothie or pancakes.



Have you noticed that your favorite foods are beginning to have words such as “whole grain” or “organic” on their packaging? Just because the packaging contains health-related wording doesn't mean the food inside is good for you. Researchers at the University of Houston found that consumers receive a “false sense of health” from nutritional claims featured on product labels. You can trust the nutrition facts label and ingredient list on the back panel to help you make an informed choice. Select items that contain a small number of familiar ingredients and those low in fat, calories, sugar and salt.

## Have Joint Pain and Stiffness?



# Eat Fish!

Recent research found that omega-3 fatty acids, found in several species of fish, such as salmon, trout and tuna, can help reduce joint pain and stiffness. Omega-3 fatty acids also increase the effectiveness of anti-inflammatory medications, which are used to ease discomfort. Your body does not produce these fatty acids on its own. To up your intake of essential fatty acids, add fish into your diet two or three times a week. One helpful tip: Choose wild salmon, which contains higher levels of omega-3 than the farmed variety. Not a fan of fish? Sprinkle walnuts or flaxseed on your salad or add them into a smoothie.



# Medical Symptoms You Should NEVER IGNORE

IT'S A COMMON SCENARIO: YOU'RE NOT FEELING WELL, AND YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE IS ALREADY CLOSED. SHOULD YOU VISIT THE EMERGENCY ROOM (ER) OR WAIT UNTIL MORNING TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR?

While sore throats, earaches, and minor cough and cold symptoms can often wait until morning, some symptoms *always* demand immediate medical attention, including loss of consciousness, uncontrollable bleeding, and signs of heart attack or stroke.

## RECOGNIZING SERIOUS ILLNESS OR INJURY

You're probably familiar with the telltale symptoms of heart attack — chest pain, shortness of breath and upper-body discomfort — and stroke, which can include severe headache, disorientation, difficulty walking and/or speaking, and weakness or numbness on one side of the body. But can you identify the lesser-known signs?

Women's heart attack and stroke symptoms often differ from those experienced by men. Fatigue and nausea are common heart attack symptoms in women, while women's stroke symptoms may include chest pain, heart palpitations, nausea and shortness of breath, according to the National Stroke Association.

Fainting, fevers greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit in infants and 105 degrees in older children and adults, severe pain anywhere in the body, and significant vomiting and diarrhea also require evaluation. In terms of injuries, head injuries — especially those accompanied by loss of consciousness and/or vomiting — and deep wounds causing unmanageable bleeding are best managed in the ER.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Although these symptoms are commonly associated with medical emergencies, you know your body best and should always feel comfortable seeking emergency medical care any time you experience unusual or concerning symptoms. This will not only set your mind at ease, but also ensure you have quick access to potentially lifesaving medical care, if needed.

**Identifying the symptoms of a medical emergency is the first step toward lifesaving care. To learn more about our emergency services, visit [ThreeRiversMedicalCenter.com](http://ThreeRiversMedicalCenter.com) and choose Emergency Department.**

## WHEN MINUTES MATTER...

When certain health conditions, including heart attack and stroke, are left untreated, the risk of permanent disability or death increases by the minute. For example, according to the National Stroke Association, for every minute a stroke goes untreated, nearly 2 million brain cells die.

If you experience the following symptoms, seek emergency care immediately.

### HEART ATTACK

- chest pain or discomfort
- extreme fatigue
- heart palpitations
- nausea or vomiting
- pain in the abdomen, neck, shoulder or arms
- shortness of breath

### STROKE

- difficulty walking or speaking
- disorientation
- sudden, severe headache
- weakness or numbness on one side of the body



# STAYING AT YOUR **BEST** *During the Winter*



WITH FEWER HOURS OF SUNLIGHT, STAYING POSITIVE IN THE WINTER CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR MANY PEOPLE. THESE **THREE STEPS** CAN HELP KEEP YOU ON TOP OF YOUR GAME THIS SEASON.

## *Step 1:* BOOST YOUR OVERALL IMMUNITY.

Keeping your immune system healthy is your best defense against colds, influenza (flu) and other respiratory infections common during the winter months. A strong immune system can also help you recover faster if you do become sick.

As you age, your immunity can waver, so keep it at optimal levels by looking for ways to balance your life. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Try going to bed earlier if you've been skimping on sleep.

The stress of holiday plans and gatherings can leave you overwhelmed and under the weather. Make time for the events that matter the most, but schedule some time to relax and reflect, too.

Eating well is also an important part of maintaining a healthy immune system. Add yogurt or kefir, which contain good forms of bacteria, to your diet to reduce infections while improving digestion. Rely on whole foods, such

as fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, lean proteins, and whole-grain carbohydrates, to nourish your body. Stay away from processed foods whenever possible. Other ways to keep your immune system happy include:

- **Enjoy tea time.** Whether you prefer Earl Grey or chamomile, tea's natural antioxidants can give your immune system an extra kick. Wind down after a busy day with decaffeinated tea — just limit your sugar and cream intake.
- **Start your meal with a bowl of soup.** A broth- or veggie-based soup can help keep your respiratory system running well and banish bad bacteria. If your soup contains tomato, you get the added benefit of lycopene, an antioxidant that has been shown to lower risk of certain types of cancer.

## THE BASICS OF A HEALTHY WINTER GETAWAY

If travel is on your agenda, protect your health with these simple tips.

- 1. Keep germs at bay** — Two weeks before you embark on your winter adventure or business trip, get your flu vaccination if you haven't already. While traveling, avoid touching your face, and wash your hands before meals and after contact with frequently shared surfaces. Use hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean in crowded airports and on flights.
- 2. Fit in exercise** — Long periods of sitting during travel can sap your energy and even contribute to blood clots. Once you arrive at your hotel, make use of the fitness center or perform a few stretches and jumping jacks in your room. Combine physical activity and sightseeing by exploring your destination on foot or strolling through an indoor local attraction if it's too cold for outdoor exercise.

**3. Stop SAD before it starts** — Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that typically affects people during the fall and winter months when shorter days equal less sunlight. Even those who live in areas with ample year-round sunshine may travel to regions where colder, shorter days leave you feeling a little blue. Talk with your doctor if you develop SAD symptoms, such as anxiety, sadness, or feelings of emptiness or guilt.

**4. Manage jet lag** — According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, jet lag, which often occurs when you change time zones during travel, can cause fatigue, nausea, irritability, poor concentration and insomnia. Help prevent jet lag by gradually adjusting your sleep schedule before leaving for your trip. En route, drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration — a common side effect of flying that can worsen jet lag symptoms — and limit caffeine and alcohol both on the plane and during your stay to improve sleep quality.



### Step 2: DO THE NECK CHECK.

Feeling under the weather before a workout? Do a neck check. When you have a regular exercise routine, skipping out when you're feeling sick could actually make you feel worse in the long run. If your symptoms are above the neck — runny nose or sore throat — feel free to head to the gym, but take the intensity down a notch or two. Moderate exercise, such as walking, can help loosen sinus congestion and increase energy levels.

Experts suggest skipping a workout and resting if you have any digestive issues, chest congestion or a fever. If you have a fever, physical activity can lead to a dangerous spike in body temperature.

Once you're feeling better, gradually work your way into your exercise routine. Depending on the severity of your illness, you may need to work out for a shorter time or at a lower intensity for a few days.

### Step 3: STAY ACTIVE INDOORS AND OUT.

Changes in weather and temperature can affect how you exercise during the winter. Dress appropriately in layers. The layers closest to your skin — including your socks — should be made of moisture-wicking materials to keep skin dry, while exterior layers should be wind- and water-resistant. Apply sunscreen to your face and neck before heading outdoors. Don't think you need sunscreen in winter? According to the American Melanoma Foundation, 80 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays pass through even on cloudy, cooler days. Also, put on sunglasses that protect against 99 to 100 percent of UV rays.

Don't discount non-exercise physical activity (NEPA), typically defined as a physical activity that doesn't involve raising the heart rate. A recent study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that when people older than age 60 stay active — whether or not they make time for cardiovascular exercise — they tend to have better heart health. So what counts as NEPA? Performing light yard work, hunting, washing the car or doing small repairs around the house are a few examples. If you're having trouble making time for regular exercise, have a set schedule of chores or activities that keep you moving.





# MEN: *Take Depression* SERIOUSLY

GUYS, IT'S OK TO SAY THE "D" WORD.  
DEPRESSION AFFECTS BOTH GENDERS.

## FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

A 2013 study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* found that men suffer from depression more than they may think and often don't believe they have the condition because they experience less well-known symptoms.

Researchers used two sets of symptoms to evaluate approximately 5,700 men and women for depression. One list included both gender-neutral and typically male-associated signs, and another featured only indicators usually found in men, such as testiness and rash behavior.

When evaluating the blended criteria, results revealed that slightly more women than men — 33.3 percent to 30.6 percent — had dealt with depression. However, when the "male symptoms" list was evaluated, 26.3 percent of men reported having experienced depression compared to 21.9 percent of women.

Depression manifests itself in many ways, and it's crucial to know how to spot it. If you do, don't ignore it.

Many men think they should power through extreme fatigue, push aside feeling unhealthy or unhappy as something everyone experiences, and not share when they feel sad — in other words, ignore the symptoms of depression. It's an attitude that leads to a lot of emotional pain.

More than 6 million American men experience significant depression each year, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Men are more reluctant to seek help than women because they fear the stigma of speaking up about something they think is a sign of weakness — a perception that can harm health and quality of life, and even lead to suicide.

## WHAT DOES MALE DEPRESSION FEEL LIKE?

The short answer: both similar and dissimilar to depression in women. Both genders may experience:

- changes in mood
- disinterest in formerly enjoyable activities
- disruptions in energy and appetite
- hopelessness

Men, however, are more likely to attempt to cope with their feelings by using drugs and alcohol and express their feelings by lashing out at others or putting themselves in dangerous situations.

## GIVE HELP A CHANCE

Don't let depression fool you into thinking there's no hope of getting better — 80 percent of depressed individuals improve with treatment, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The first step: Speak with your doctor, who can rule out other causes for your symptoms. He or she may recommend antidepressant medications or refer you for one-on-one psychotherapy with a mental health professional so you can better understand your symptoms and how to manage them.

When you seek help, you're not waving a white flag at depression — you're taking a stand for the people you love, and most importantly, for yourself.

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**We can help. For more information about our behavioral health services, visit [ThreeRiversMedicalCenter.com](http://ThreeRiversMedicalCenter.com) or call our 24-hour crisis hotline at (800) 249-3602.**

# Distracted Driving =

# DANGER

WHEN DRIVERS ARE PREOCCUPIED, EVERYONE ON THE ROAD IS IN JEOPARDY.

## 3,328

people in 2012 were killed in accidents related to distracted driving.

## 50%

of high schoolers age 16 or older text or email while driving.

## 660,000

drivers at any given moment are using a cell phone while driving.

# 10 percent

OF ALL DRIVERS

**YOUNGER THAN AGE 20**

WHO WERE INVOLVED IN A FATAL CRASH WERE DISTRACTED AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT.



The average text is read in 4.6 seconds. Driving at 55 miles per hour, five seconds of driving is equal to 100 yards, nearly the length of a football field.

You may already know the danger of using cell phones and other electronic devices while driving, but distracted driving is defined as anything that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel or your mind off driving.

Other common driving distractions include:

- adjusting the music
- eating and drinking
- grooming or putting on makeup
- interacting with other passengers
- texting

Young and inexperienced drivers are the most likely to be involved in a distracted driving accident, but no drivers are immune to the dangers. Studies have shown that texting while driving impairs your

ability to drive as much as — or even worse than — being drunk behind the wheel.

### STAYING FOCUSED, STAYING SAFE

Thankfully, distracted driving accidents are completely preventable. If you have a new driver in your family, talk about the risks of all forms of distracted driving, not just texting or talking on the phone. Encourage everyone in your family to leave their smartphones in the glove compartment or another inaccessible place to avoid the temptation to check while on the road.

Don't be afraid to call out distracted drivers who are putting you and others danger. Offer to read or send a text for him, or suggest she pull over to make a phone call.

\* Statistics from [distraction.gov](http://distraction.gov) (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)



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This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your doctor before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.

# 3 WAYS

## *a Hospital Patient Portal Can Make Your Life Easier*

OUR PATIENT PORTAL CAN HELP SIMPLIFY  
MEDICAL MATTERS.

1

### CONVENIENCE.

With a personal, private Portal account, you have 24-hour access to your hospital inpatient records. All you need is a computer or device that is hooked up to the Internet.

2

### ACCESS.

It's easy to review your discharge plan and health information — even while you're on vacation. Only you can see what's in your account, but you can arrange to give a family member access, and you can share documents with your doctors.

3

### LESS PAPER.

Online health records are the wave of the future. You'll appreciate how easy it is to view and manage your information in the Portal.

### GET STARTED WITH MY HEALTH HOME

If you've had an overnight stay in the hospital, it's important that you have a personal Portal account.

Why? When you're discharged from the hospital, we do everything we can to help you understand and follow instructions for your recovery.

The Portal enhances your ability to keep on track with follow-up orders. And inside the Portal, you'll find health and wellness information specifically for your needs.

Setting up a personal My Health Home account is free — and easy.

Start the process the next time you are at the hospital or as you register for an inpatient stay.

1. At registration, share or confirm your email address.
2. We will send you an email with a link to set up your personal Portal account.
3. When you're in the Portal, follow the easy step-by-step instructions.
4. Visit your Portal account to view information about your hospital stay, download records and share information with your outpatient doctors.
5. Bookmark the Portal site and check it regularly for your updates, health information and links to other sites.

We want our patients to stay informed and involved in their healthcare every step of the way.

To learn more, visit [ThreeRiversMedicalCenter.com](http://ThreeRiversMedicalCenter.com) and search for "My Health Home."