July

Member Newsletter

Take more nature breaks for better health

If your go-to break when you've finished a work or home task is to scroll through your phone or flip on the TV, trade it for stepping outside. Developing the "nature break habit" has many proven benefits for better health and well-being, including the following:

Enhances moods. Researchers found that just looking at a tree or greenspace can lift your spirits. Beyond that, spending even a little time out in nature can help lower blood pressure and reduce the stress-related hormones, cortisol and adrenaline. While you're outside, if you take a few slow, deep belly breaths, your pause will be even more restorative!

Promotes clearer vision. Rest your eyes by focusing on the tree line or ridge on the distant horizon for about 20 minutes, if possible. This can help relieve blurry or double vision, red eyes or headaches from staring at computer or phone screens for prolonged periods. https://healthmatters.wphospital.org/blog/january/2021/my-doctor-told-me-to-get-outside/

Boosts your attention. Nature offers many clues to slow down, get out of your worrying mind and into just "being." Simply pausing to gaze intently at fluttering leaves or the flight of a bee can be an in-the-moment form of meditation, helping you return to your day more focused and refreshed.

Provides a dose of vitamin D. As short as 5 minutes of unprotected sun exposure to your skin may be enough time to allow the sun's UV rays to help your body produce vitamin D, keeping your bones sturdy and immune system strong, while raising the feel-good hormone, serotonin. After that, follow up with good sun protection, like a 30-SPF or higher sunblock. (Ask your doctor how much time you can safely expose your skin to UV rays).

Increases feeling of social connectedness. Stepping outside brings you in proximity to human contact— whether it's people running errands, postal workers, dog walkers, or neighbors strolling, this human contact and a sense of community is so important for good mental health.

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Using good skin protection consistently is the best—and only—way to enjoy the sunshine safely.

Get the Facts on Sun Protection

Summer is finally under way, and you may be looking forward to getting outside more often to get the seasonal "glow" of a tan. While sunlight is essential for vitamin D production, prolonged exposure can be dangerous, and, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation, there is no such thing as a healthy tan! Any tanning that results from UV rays—whether outdoors or indoors—increases your chance of developing skin cancer, as well as damages your skin cells and speeds up aging. Skin cancer is the most common of all cancer types. More than 3.5 million people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year in the United States—that's more than all other cancers combined! Before you head outside, make sure to protect your skin with the help of these tips.

Avoid purposeful tanning. Spending the day at the pool or beach? Load up on sunscreen and avoid just laying out in the direct sun. Avoid tanning beds, period.

Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or greater at least 30 minutes before sun exposure, and reapply at least every 2 hours.

Wear sunglasses with total UV protection.

Stay in the shade as much as possible. Avoid direct exposure as much as possible during peak UV radiation hours, between 10 am and 2 pm.

Wear wide-brimmed hats that cover and protect areas like your head, neck, face and ears.

Wear clothing made of tightly woven fabrics that are bright colors.

If you already have sunburn, stay inside until it heals. If you have to go out, wear long-sleeved shirts and pants to prevent further skin damage.

> If you notice any suspicious spots on your skin or feel uncomfortable with the way a mole is changing, it is important to talk to your doctor. In fact, you should see a dermatologist once a year for a skin check, or more often if recommended based on your family and medical history.

Sources:
American Academy of Dermatology. https://www.aad.org/media/stats-skin-cancer
Skin Cancer Foundation. https://www.skincancer.org/risk-factors/tanning/

Getting Along with Others at Work

Our changing world has increased political and other tensions, including conflicts relating to COVID-19. It's important to use good communication skills to create a supportive work environment, avoid unfavorable outcomes and help you feel happier at work.

Respect other people's perspectives. If you don't agree with someone's opinion, avoid frowning, rolling your eyes or looking away. Remember, we each come from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. This, in turn, affects the outside factors that can influence and reinforce our beliefs, including the news and social media.

Learn to manage hot topics thoughtfully. Recognize how you communicate your differences. If the other person seems uncomfortable or disagreeable, ask yourself, "Will this conversation improve my relationship with my coworker, or potentially damage it?"

If you're sensing conflict, tune into your own emotional state. Are your upset feelings being triggered by making assumptions of what your coworker is feeling? Does the interaction remind you of someone else you don't get along with? Recognize that you are responsible for how you feel and react to a situation.

Reflect back what the other person is saying. During a tense dialogue, responding with "so what I hear you saying is…" helps validate the other person's perspective. Use "I" statements to frame your views, such as "I have always found that…" This avoids putting the other person on the defensive.

If the discussion is heading south, try saying this: "It seems we aren't going to agree at the moment, so maybe we can switch the subject to something more lighthearted." Or, you just may need to exit the conversation gracefully, saying something like, "I see your point, and I guess we will just have to agree to disagree today."

> **Having difficulty with coworkers?** Ask your health practitioner about a referral for counseling or seek support from your company's EAP.

> **For more help,** talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a licensed counselor.

UV Safety Month—for skin and eyes!

Along with wearing a hat, sunblock, and staying in the shade in the midday sun, good sun protection includes wearing sunglasses made to protect against both UVA and UVB rays. Too much exposure to UV light raises your risk of eye diseases and other problems such as cataracts—even babies and children need to wear hats and sunglasses! And remember clouds don't block UV light—so wear them even on overcast days. For more complete information, visit https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/sun

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