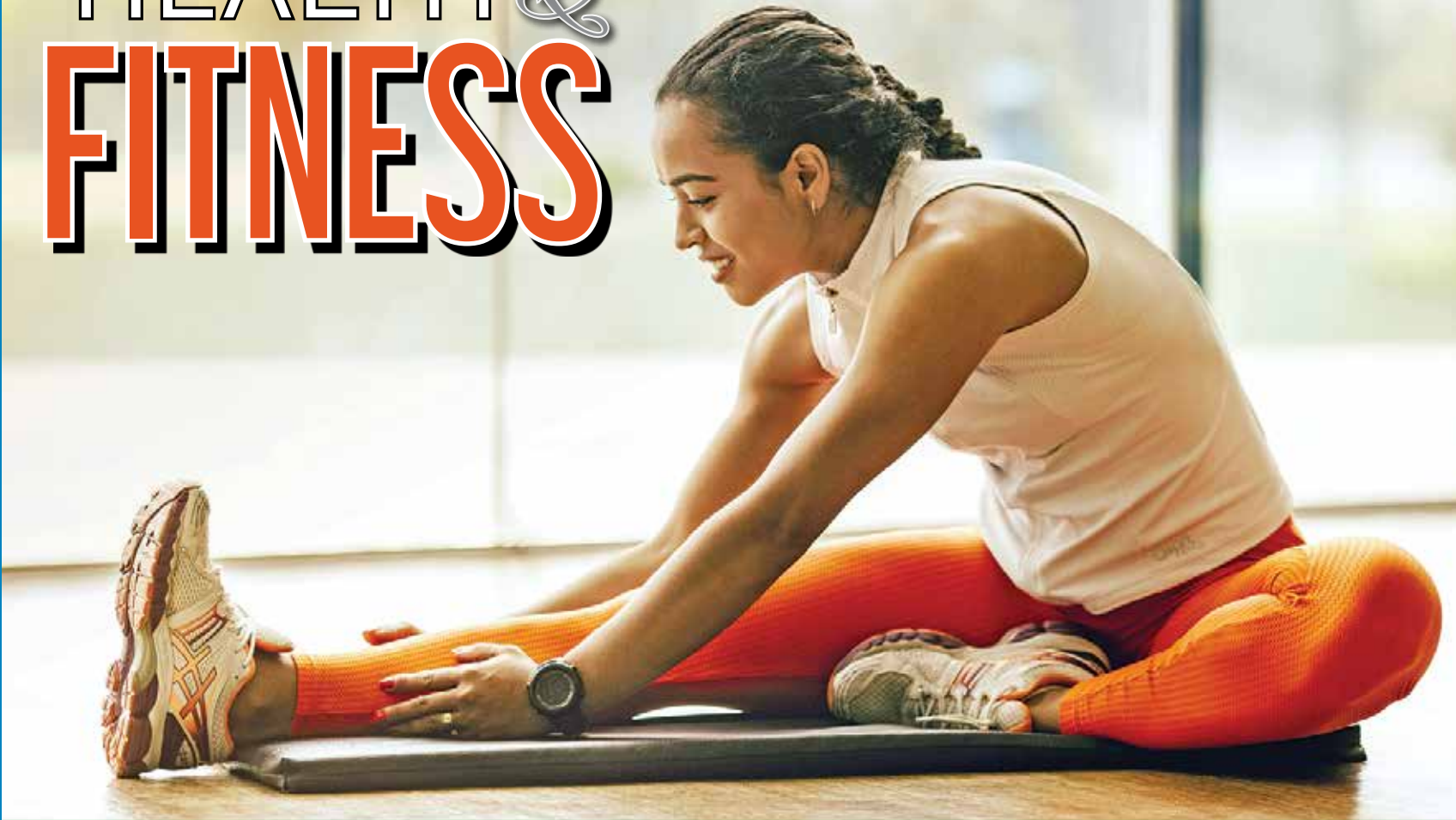


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As individuals ponder the benefits of physical activity, they can keep the many ways exercise affects mental health in mind.

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How routine physical activity can positively affect mental health

It can reduce stress and depression, give self-esteem a boost

The physical changes people experience after committing to routine physical activity are visible to the naked eye.

After making such a commitment, particularly if one is accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle, people may shed a noticeable amount of weight, move more quickly and even appear younger, a change that is perhaps related to the positive effects exercise has on sleep.

Less noticeable but no less advantageous are the mental health benefits associated with routine exercise.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, physical activity releases chemicals in the brain that positively affect mood, thus making exercise a tool anyone can utilize to improve their mental health.

As individuals ponder the benefits of physical activity, they can keep the following ways exercise affects mental health in mind.

Stress reduction

A recent Gallup poll found that 40 percent of adults worldwide experienced a lot of stress. The poll asked adults in 142 countries and areas, which underscores the significance of stress as a legitimate global health concern.

The Mental Health Foundation notes that the most common physical signs of stress include difficulty sleeping, sweating and loss of appetite, symptoms that

are triggered by a flood of the stress hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline released in the body. Those hormones increase blood pressure and heart rate.

Exercise can help to alleviate stress, and the M notes that adults who are highly active have been found to have lower rates of stress than those who live more sedentary lifestyles.

Self-esteem

A recent study published in The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness compared 352 participants between the ages of 20 and 40 who regularly exercised at least two days per week for the previous six months with 350 similarly aged sedentary individuals.

The study assessed various characteristics of each group and researchers ultimately concluded that those who exercised had higher levels of self-esteem than those who did not.

As a result, the authors behind the study recommended exercise as a preferred method to increase self-esteem.

Depression

A systematic review and network meta-analysis of randomized control trials found that exercise is an effective treatment for depression.

That review and analysis, which published recently in the peer-reviewed medical journal The BMJ, reviewed 218 unique studies involving more than 14,000 participants.

Walking, jogging, yoga, and strength training were found to be especially effective at treating depression, which the World Health Organization estimates affects about 280 million people worldwide.

The physical benefits of routine physical activity may be most noticeable. However, regular exercise also has a profound effect on individuals' mental health.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Understanding thyroid health

Despite its prevalence, thyroid disease remains widely misunderstood

An estimated 20 million Americans have some form of thyroid disease. YARAL Pharma recently put forth an effort at raising awareness of thyroid disease, particularly hypothyroidism, a condition in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormone.

Despite its prevalence, thyroid disease remains widely misunderstood.

The role of the thyroid

The thyroid, a small butterfly-shaped gland located in the neck, plays a vital role in regulating metabolism, energy levels, and overall hormonal balance. Conditions such as hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, and thyroid nodules can significantly impact health and quality of life. However, up to 60% of individuals with thyroid disease are unaware of their condition, often due to a lack of awareness about the signs and symptoms, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment.

Signs and symptoms

Thyroid disorders can manifest in various ways, including fatigue, weight changes, mood fluctuations, and cognitive difficulties. These symptoms often resemble common day-to-day ailments, making them easy to overlook. As a result, many patients live with thyroid conditions for years before seeking treatment.

What can be done

Treatment for thyroid disease varies depending on the type and severity of the condition, as well as the patient's age and overall health.

Some common treatments include:

- **Antithyroid drugs:** These medications stop the thyroid from producing hormones.
- **Radioactive iodine therapy:** A widely used and effective treatment involving the oral intake of radioactive iodine. Most patients who undergo this therapy eventually develop hypothyroidism.
- **Beta-blockers:** These medications don't affect the thyroid but can help manage symptoms such as rapid heart rate, tremors, and nervousness.
- **Surgery:** In rare cases, a healthcare provider may recommend surgically removing the thyroid. Patients undergoing this procedure will need to take synthetic thyroid replacement hormones for the rest of their life.
- **Thyroid hormone replacement:** For hypothyroidism, patients typically take a daily dose of synthetic thyroxine (T4), a hormone that replaces what their thyroid can no longer produce.

Take control of your thyroid health

If experiencing symptoms of thyroid disease or have concerns about thyroid health, talk to a healthcare provider to learn more about diagnosis and treatment options.

(NAPS)

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Lasers: A safer alternative to weight-loss drugs?

Medications can have health risks while lasers are non-invasive

Weight-loss drugs have skyrocketed in popularity because of their quick results and use among celebrities and influencers. J.P. Morgan predicts that by 2030, 30 million Americans will use them.

However, some medical providers say the drugs' hidden health risks may not be worth their benefits.

"Weight loss is so often prescribed to improve health," said Dr. Cesar Lara, a board-certified medical bariatric physician.

"The irony is that many of today's weight-loss medications bring forth their own set of serious risk factors," Lara added.

Hidden risks

A growing number of weight-loss drug users report side effects including nausea, vomiting, tachycardia, fatigue, depression and suicidal ideation.

And because these drugs are relatively new for weight-loss purposes, questions linger about their long-term impacts.

Lara said patients considering the drugs should know their potential side effects and alternative options.

"I would advise any patient of mine who needs or desires to lose weight to investigate safe options, like low-level lasers, and to understand the risks of taking medications that could potentially compromise their health," Lara said.

Safer alternatives

Low-level lasers are a non-invasive,

pain-free option for people seeking safer weight-loss treatment.

For example, the Emerald Laser, an FDA-cleared low-level laser for fat loss and body contouring, is additionally FDA-cleared for treating obesity, making it a good choice for those with a lot of weight to lose.

The Zerona, also an FDA-cleared low-level laser for fat loss and body contouring, has over-the-counter clearance for overall body circumference reduction, providing a way to quickly target stubborn areas of fat.

Both lasers create temporary tiny pores in fatty cells to release fat, which the body's lymphatic system naturally removes. Ultimately, the lasers shrink fat cells without damaging them.

This controlled approach helps ensure optimal results in target areas such as the waist, chest or back and requires no recovery time.

Unlike many other weight-loss treatments, lasers do not elevate plasma lipids, triglycerides or cholesterol. They also don't cause bruising or swelling.

Fat-loss laser treatments are often available at doctors' offices, chiropractors, spas, health centers and fitness centers. To find a location near you or to offer a laser service at your business, visit fatlosslasers.com.

When considering your weight-loss options, prioritize safe, non-invasive treatments with no side effects.

(STATEPOINT)



According to Dr. Cesar Lara, a board-certified medical bariatric physician, patients are often encouraged to lose weight to improve their health. However, many of today's weight loss medications have risk factors. Fat-loss laser treatments are an alternative worth considering as they're a non-invasive, safer option.

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Beverages recommended as part of a healthy diet include plain water and plain milk because they provide essential nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, and don't contain added sugars.

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Choosing healthy beverages for kids and teens

Plain water and milk remain the healthiest options

Choosing healthy beverages for children and adolescents is just as important as choosing healthy foods, as it impacts everything from oral health to chronic disease risk.

That's why leading health and nutrition organizations developed new healthy beverage recommendations for families with children ages 5-18.

These evidence-based recommendations were created as part of a collaboration by experts at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Heart Association, who were brought together by Healthy Eating Research with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

To make choosing healthy beverages easier for families, the organizations created these three categories:

Beverages to drink

These beverages are recommended as part of a healthy diet because they provide essential nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, and don't contain added sugars.

- Plain drinking water is still the best option to keep kids healthy and hydrated. It's also often

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Fitness classes seniors can consider

They're a good way to be active in a shorter amount of time

Exercise is a pillar of a healthy lifestyle. When individuals exercise regularly and pair physical activity with a healthy diet and smart lifestyle choices, they can extend their life expectancies and sleep well knowing they're doing everything they can to increase their chances of enjoying a limitless retirement.

Adults over 50 know it's not always so easy to exercise. Hectic schedules can make it seem like there's little time for exercise. And even when adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts combining strength training with cardiovascular exercise are too time-consuming and possibly even a little dull.

In such instances, fitness classes can take the place of more traditional exercise regimens. Various classes provide a challenging workout, and many can do so in an hour or less.

Pilates

Improving balance, core strength and flexibility are three goals of Pilates. Pilates has an interesting history, as it was created by Joseph Pilates, a German prisoner of war who was imprisoned off the coast of England during World War I.

Pilates and the exercising phenomenon he created ultimately made their way to



When older adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts are too time-consuming and a bit too challenging. In such instances, fitness classes are worth consideration.

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the United States, where the routine was embraced by dancers looking for a way to aid their injury recovery. Pilates is now part of millions of individuals' exercise regimens.

This low-impact exercise is designed to strengthen muscles and improve alignment and flexibility. Achieving greater balance after 50 pays untold dividends for older adults, who can decrease their risk for falls

and fall-related injuries by increasing their steadiness.

Spin cycle

Spin classes are a wildly popular exercise program that utilizes cycling to help people break a sweat. Cardiovascular exercise is beneficial for a number of reasons, including its connection to heart health and even cognitive health. But many people lament daily sessions on a treadmill or elliptical that they find boring.

Spin classes involve the use of stationary bikes, but instructors typically guide class members through conditions that mimic outdoor cycling sessions.

Resistance and pedaling speed changes throughout a spin class, which serves to keep individuals engaged and burn lots of calories.

Kickboxing

Sometimes referred to as Krav Maga, kickboxing is another unique and challenging class offered at many fitness facilities. Martial arts like kickboxing assist with weight loss and can help people improve their muscle tone, flexibility and stamina.

Adults over 50 who are not accustomed

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

HEALTHY BEVERAGES • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

the most accessible and affordable.

• Plain, pasteurized milk is another healthy option because it provides important nutrients that growing kids and teens need.

Beverages to limit

• 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice can be part of a healthy diet, but daily consumption should be limited. Whole fruits and vegetables are generally better choices because they provide dietary fiber, contributing to a feeling of fullness.

• Plant-based milk alternatives like oat milk and almond milk should be limited because they are not nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk, which provides essential nutrients that kids need to grow up healthy. Many also contain added sugars and non-sugar sweeteners, which are harmful to kids' health.

If your child is allergic to dairy milk or has a dietary restriction, talk to your doctor or registered dietitian about finding the plant-based milk alternative that is best for your child.

• Flavored milks, like chocolate milk and strawberry milk, should be limited because they contain high amounts of added sugars and non-sugar sweeteners.

In the event your child does not like drinking plain milk, it's best to consider other foods from the dairy group (like unsweetened yogurt) before offering flavored milk.

Beverages to avoid

These beverages are not recommended as part of a healthy diet because they offer no nutritional value and have ingredients that can be harmful to kids and teens.

• Sugar-sweetened beverages, such

as sports drinks, sodas, fruit drinks, fruitades, aguas frescas and sweetened waters are high in added sugars, which can put children at risk for dental cavities, and diet-related diseases like type 2 diabetes and obesity.

• Drinks with non-sugar sweeteners, such as aspartame, stevia and monk fruit, should also be avoided. Just because a drink is advertised as sugar-free doesn't mean it's healthier. In fact, new research shows non-sugar sweeteners may not help control body weight and may increase the risk of diet-related chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

• Drinks with caffeine or other stimulants like taurine should be avoided. These include energy drinks, energy shots, coffee, and tea.

Evidence suggests that there is no safe amount of caffeine consumption for children under 18 and that even small amounts can lead to poor sleep quality, increased blood pressure, and depressive moods and anxiety.

"We all want our kids to grow up healthy, and research shows that what kids and teens drink is an important part of a balanced diet, not just what they eat. But there are so many drink products on the market, it can be hard to figure out what's healthy and what's not," said Megan Elsener Lott, MPH, RDN, deputy director of Healthy Eating Research.

"These recommendations provide a gold standard based on the latest research and can be goals that families work toward together," Elsener Lott added.

You can learn more about healthy drinks by visiting healthyeatingresearch.org.

(STATEPOINT)

Kids should be encouraged to be active

Studies show it can reduce risks of health conditions later

Encouraging children to be physically active can be an important step in helping them to be healthier later in life.

The Physical Rehabilitation Network (PRN) says active kids are more likely to become healthy adults. Studies have shown that being physically active and making smart food choices while young can lead to a reduced risk of developing many serious health conditions later in life, which can include diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, and even certain cancers.

What's more, Better Health Victoria in Australia says evidence suggests that physically active children also are more likely to mature into physically active adults.

Developing fitness skills early in life is a wise choice. However, one in six kids between the ages of 2 and 19 in the United States are obese, and just one in three are physically active each day, reports the Physical Rehabilitation Network.

Families can work together to help kids get on paths to better health and to become more active. This may involve putting limits on screen time and encouraging outdoor play and group active activities like sports or dance.

(METRO CREATIVE)

FITNESS CLASSES • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

to physical activity may find their energy levels are low, but a few kickboxing sessions may produce noticeable differences in stamina.

The balance benefits of kickboxing are similar to those provided by Pilates, so this activity may be particularly beneficial for adults over 50 looking to reduce their vulnerability to falls as they grow older.

Dance

Dancing is widely seen as a fun activity, and rightfully so, as few things can be as

enjoyable as cutting a rug. But dancing also provides a great cardiovascular workout.

Local community centers and even some fitness facilities offer age-specific dancing classes, which the AARP notes are great for individuals who want to build core strength, improve bone health and protect their heart.

Adults over 50 who want to be more physically active can look to any number of fitness classes to break a sweat, build strength and have fun all at once.

(METRO CREATIVE)



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Diabetes and your feet, what you need to know

There are steps to prevent complications and keep feet healthy

Foot ulcers develop in about 15% of the 25 million Americans living with diabetes and are a top cause of hospitalization. These ulcers can lead to serious complications, such as infection and amputation.

According to foot and ankle surgeons, there are steps you can take to prevent complications and keep your feet healthy, as well as breakthrough treatments that are saving limbs, restoring mobility and improving lives.

“The majority of lower-extremity amputations are preceded by a reoccurring foot sore or an ulcer that won’t heal,” says John S. Steinberg, DPM, FACFAS, a board-certified foot and ankle surgeon and a Fellow Member and Past President of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

“Patients do best when they take charge of their foot health with the help of a foot and ankle surgeon,” Steinberg added.

The surgeon members of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons are sharing some important insights into preventing foot ulcers associated with

diabetes and treating them if they do occur.

Make these precautions part of your foot care routine:

- Inspect feet daily using a flashlight and mirror to see the bottoms of your feet.
 - Moisturize dry, cracking feet to prevent sores. Use powder to control moisture that can result in blisters.
 - To prevent injury, wear protective, well-fitting shoes and socks at all times, even in the house. Change socks daily and more often if your feet get wet or sweaty. Avoid socks with holes or seams. Sometimes diabetic shoes are prescribed to avoid pressure and rubbing on the feet.
 - Get regular foot exams from a foot and ankle surgeon, which can reduce amputation risk by 45-85%. The surgeon can also screen feet for loss of protective sensation.
 - Manage your diabetes. Out-of-control blood sugar levels can lead to nerve cell damage, making it harder to detect foot problems.
- Look for telltale signs that an ulcer may be developing:



The surgeon members of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons are sharing some important insights into preventing foot ulcers associated with diabetes and treating them if they do occur.

SIARHEI KHALETSKI/ISTOCK Health & Fitness

- Swelling. The foot or ankle may look puffy or engorged and larger than the other.
 - Temperature. Cold feet might mean a circulatory issue, whereas hot feet might mean infection.
 - Color changes. Redness and even other colors might appear before an ulcer forms.
 - Calluses. If a callus changes colors or develops dark, “dried blood” colored spots, it may be time to have a foot and ankle surgeon offer a proper diagnosis.
- Ask your foot and ankle surgeon about innovative treatments.

If you do experience a non-healing ulcer, talk to your foot and ankle surgeon right away about innovative technologies that stimulate healing.

Groundbreaking approaches include stem cell therapy, the use of bioengineered skin substitutes to accelerate growth of healthy skin, and negative pressure wound therapy to promote healing and enable healthy, new tissue to grow.

Today, foot and ankle surgeons rarely do a skin graft without negative pressure wound therapy. Skin grafting for foot ulcers has also advanced.

Surgeons now use advanced reconstructive surgery and grafting techniques to promote wound healing and decrease wound recurrence.

The success rate of these advanced therapies is high, providing substantial improvement over treatments of the not-too-distant past, when doctors would clean and bandage the wound and hope for the best.

“Thanks to the many advances in diabetic foot care, patients today are having simpler surgeries, avoiding amputations, and getting back to everyday life sooner than ever before,” Steinberg said.

For more information or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org, the patient education website of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

(STATEPOINT)



Many people prefer to know how many calories they should consume each day but the quality of the calories consumed goes a long way toward determining how nutritious a diet is.

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Calorie consumption can be confusing

There’s no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to calorie consumption, and that can contribute to some confusion as adults try to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Dietary guidelines established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services promote nutrient-dense foods and beverages, but many people prefer to know how many calories they should consume each day. Though that’s understandable, the quality of the calories consumed goes a long way toward determining how nutritious a diet is.

The Cleveland Clinic notes that the DHHS guidelines have historically recommended adults 21 and over consume

between 1,600 and 3,000 calories per day. However, staying within those parameters does not necessarily mean a person’s diet is healthy.

Individuals should keep total calorie consumption in mind when planning their diets however, it’s equally important to recognize what else the DHHS has to say about diet, particularly foods to avoid.

The department recommends limiting consumption of foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Limiting consumption of alcoholic beverages is another way to ensure your diet is working for you and not against you.

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