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Getting Tired of Singing “Happy Birthday”? Here’s an Alternative!

A lot of us have been working from home for months. As our workplaces open up, we might begin to feel pretty jumpy! Hiding out in our homes felt safe, and now we’re anxious about going forth. Ohio State University researchers say this uncertainty and unpredictability may trigger a lot of fear and stress. They recommend that we reduce this anxiety with lifestyle changes such as getting enough sleep, exercise and healthy foods.

OSU’s chief wellness officer Bernadette Melnyk offers one more clever tip that can help us kill two birds with one stone while sanitizing our hands. “While you wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, take the opportunity to take five deep, abdominal breaths,” she says. “Doing this at least five times a day can reduce anxiety and even lower your blood pressure.”





Health Care During the Pandemic

Information from The National Council on Aging (NCOA.org).

Hospitals across the country report that emergency department (ED) visits have declined significantly for illnesses not related to COVID-19. In particular, heart attacks and strokes appear to be going unchecked. Some hospitals also observe a decline in fall-related ED visits.

Doctors believe that people are so scared of contracting COVID-19 that they're not seeking help for life-threatening ailments. Nationwide, nearly a third of adults say that they have delayed or avoided medical care because they are concerned about contracting COVID-19, according to a poll from the American College of Emergency Physicians. Nearly 75% of poll respondents also expressed concern about overstressing the health care system; more than half worried they won't be able to see a doctor.

Strokes and heart attacks demand immediate attention

While stay-at-home guidance is a critical part of reducing the spread of COVID-19, if you are having symptoms of a stroke or heart attack or have experienced a fall and suffered a fracture, broken bone, or brain injury, it is important to seek medical care right away.

For strokes, in order for clot busters—medicines that break up clots and prevent long-term problems like paralysis—to work, or for surgeries to be successful, it's crucial to get to the hospital within 3 hours after the first symptoms appear. Some patients are not eligible for treatments if they get to the hospital too late.

Heart attack victims also may suffer more if care is delayed. A report in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology looked at treatment of heart attack patients



in March 2020, when COVID-19 cases were climbing, compared to the previous year and found a 38% reduction in patients being treated for a life-threatening event known as a STEMI—the blockage of one of the major arteries that supplies oxygen-rich blood to the heart, which results in a serious type of heart attack.

The bottom line

The bottom line is that hospitals have safety measures in place to protect us from infections and have allocated beds for patients with non-COVID illnesses. If you are experiencing symptoms of a stroke or heart attack or if you've had a fall and suspect an injury, don't delay care.

Five More Ways to Stay Healthy While Social Distancing



The CDC reminds us to use disinfecting products safely. What else can we do to protect our health at this time?

Don't neglect routine health care appointments

The page 1 story, "Health Care During the Pandemic," urged patients to seek help immediately for symptoms of stroke, heart attack and fall injuries. Doctors also report that many seniors have been avoiding important appointments for managing health problems such as diabetes, kidney disease, heart failure, hypertension, age-related macular degeneration and other chronic conditions. Hospitals, clinics, doctor offices and dentists are taking stringent precautions to keep patients safe at this time. Many have implemented telemedicine visits for patients. Contact your healthcare provider to make arrangements for your routine appointments. If appointments were cancelled earlier, call to reschedule.

Avoid loneliness and depression

Before the COVID-19 epidemic, seniors were already dealing with what's been called "an epidemic of loneliness." By most accounts, the quarantine has multiplied that problem dramatically. But some good news is emerging during this unprecedented time. Many

people have really stepped up to the plate to keep older adults connected in new ways! Experts say many seniors have taken up communication tools like video chatting and social media for the first time—and predictions are that they're won't give up those new skills as social distancing is relaxed. Senior living communities are working overtime (and then some) to keep residents connected at a safe distance, and in some states others are cautiously reopening. Find ways to connect with other people and to get outdoors safely.

Take care while sanitizing

These days, most of us are becoming expert germ fighters. That's an important way to stop the spread of the coronavirus. We're washing our hands frequently, and disinfecting surfaces, especially high touch areas such as door handles and countertops. But the products we use aren't without dangers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports an increase in calls to poison control hotlines relating to disinfectant products, and they offer this advice: "To reduce improper use and prevent unnecessary chemical exposures, users should always read and follow directions on the label, only use water at room temperature for dilution (unless stated otherwise on the label), avoid mixing chemical products, wear eye and skin protection, and ensure adequate ventilation." And even if you are using these products frequently, be sure to put them away safely after each use, out of reach of children and people with dementia.

Eat well ... but not too much

So many of us are missing our favorite restaurants and leisurely grocery shopping trips. Today many older adults are relying on family to shop for them, or trying to make very few trips. It's tempting to rely more on processed foods instead of fresh veggies and fruit—but those packaged foods might be loaded with salt and unhealthy fats. And though food can be a comfort, we'll be decidedly less comfortable if we pack on extra pounds.

We can still get fresh, healthy food through grocery delivery or takeout or delivery from restaurants. Senior meal delivery programs are getting back on track. Senior living communities have been delivering meals to residents' rooms, and many are gradually reopening their dining rooms. And one more reminder: despite all the jokes about having a couple of "quarantinis," this is not a time to increase our alcohol consumption.

Exercise: make the effort

Inactivity is a major threat to senior wellness. Under normal circumstances, most older adults try to get some exercise. Some of us are more active than others, with a regular routine of aerobic, muscle strengthening and balance activities. Others might not take part in formal exercise, yet still get a fair amount of activity—walking to the store, visiting friends, gardening or cleaning the house.

But many of our habitual exercise opportunities are closed or operating at limited capacity right now—the senior center, the gym, or the exercise room at our senior living community. Still, there's plenty we can do to stay on the move. While observing the recommended social distancing, go out for a walk. If you are a gym member, ask if they offer virtual classes. Check out exercise videos. If you and a friend are exercise buddies, email each other reminders. And if you're having frequent video chats with a friend or family member these days, mix it up with audio-only calls so you can do laps around the house while catching up on gossip.

Another Idea for a Socially Distant Activity



As we've been sheltering in place, a lot of us have been playing more computer games. But for a change of pace, why not organize a Zoom chess or card game with a friend, or a group bingo session? Recent research assures us that board and card games are as good as "brain training" computer programs.

In March 2020, University of Edinburgh psychologists conducted a study of 1,000 older adults and found that those who play a lot of "analog games"—cards, bingo, chess and so forth—remained more mentally sharp in their later years. Even those who only took up games while in their 70s were more likely to preserve their memory and thinking speed. The researchers said that a lot of studies have been done on "brain training" games, but plain old board games are just as protective. These days, even if we can't sit across the table from a friend, there's an alternative way to challenge our minds while socializing!

Monthly Wordfind and More!

Be sure to visit our online edition at rphmessenger.com to download our monthly wordfind on Words of Wisdom, discover socially distanced volunteer opportunities, and read more healthy aging news and tips!

10 ways to safely help your community

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