

# Personal Best

## HOPE Health Letter<sup>®</sup>

JUNE 2023

## Noteworthy Medical Myths

**Getting a flu shot can give you the flu. Fact:** Flu vaccines are either made with inactive flu virus or no virus at all. They are recommended for adults and children. Speaking of viral illnesses, the old cliché *starve a fever, feed a cold* is baloney.

**Men are more likely to get heart disease than women. Fact:** The CDC reports that almost as many women die from heart disease as men. And, just like for men, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women.

**Eating close to bedtime causes weight gain. Fact:** What's best is to avoid eating ultra-processed food and overeating each day.

**Eating carrots helps you see in the dark. Fact:** While carrots are good for eyesight, they aren't *that* good. The vitamin A in carrots helps you see in **low light** but won't give you superhero night vision.

**No pain, no gain. Fact:** Exercise does not need to hurt to be effective. When starting a new workout regimen, you may experience some temporary normal muscle soreness.

**Reading in dim light damages vision. Fact:** There is no scientific evidence that reading in the dark does any long-term harm to your eyes, according to the Cleveland Clinic Cole Eye Institute.

**Eggs cause unhealthy cholesterol. Fact:** Eggs contain some dietary cholesterol, but this does not translate into blood cholesterol. Studies show an egg a day is okay for heart health.

**Note:** Online health advice varies in quality. The resources we recommend include:

National Institutes of Health: [nih.gov](https://www.nih.gov)

MedlinePlus: [medlineplus.gov](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/)

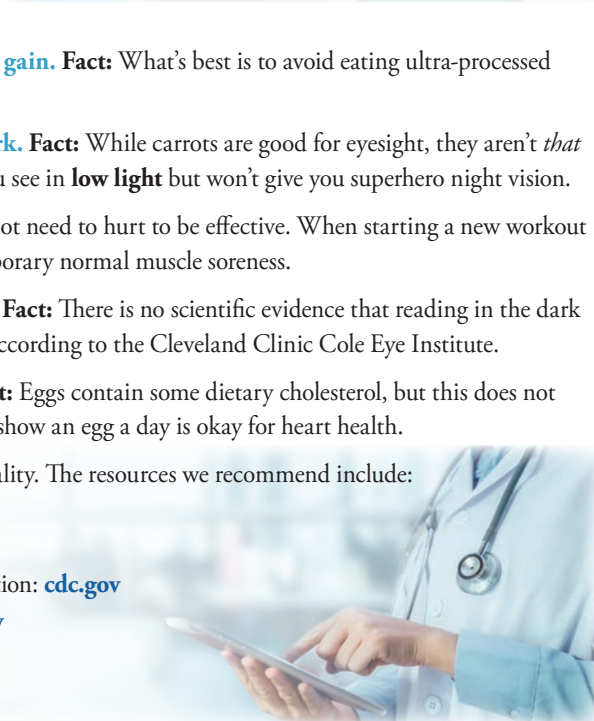
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Food and Drug Administration: [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

American Heart Association: [heart.org](https://www.heart.org)

American Cancer Society: [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org)

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Getting Forgetful?**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/23V6tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/23V6tools).



## BEST bits



### ■ The 36th Annual National Cancer Survivors Day is June 4.

It's a celebration of life honoring cancer survivors. There are more than 18 million in the U.S. as of January 2022; this represents about 5.4% of the population. The number of U.S. cancer survivors is projected to reach 24%, or 22.5 million, by 2032. The declines in death rates were steepest in lung cancer and melanoma (by 4% to 5% per year). Getting all the screenings your health care provider recommends, getting regular checkups and checking your skin regularly can help reduce your risk of cancer.



### ■ Family Health and Fitness Day is June 10.

It promotes the importance of parks and recreation services in keeping families and communities physically active. Celebrate this day with your family in your local parks. Learn more at [npra.org/events/family-fitness-day](https://npra.org/events/family-fitness-day).

■ **Cover up your feet.** They can develop skin cancer (melanoma) through sun exposure. Feet are the most misdiagnosed and fatal site of this cancer. In 2022 researchers found that the overall survival rate for melanoma of the foot or ankle was just 52%, compared to the 85% survival rate for patients with melanomas on other areas of the body. Possible signs of foot melanoma: a brown or black vertical line under a toenail, a changing mole, a pinkish-red spot or growth or a non-healing sore on your foot.

**Note:** Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information, visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

# What are Functional Foods?

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Many foods serve the function of providing us with calories, satisfying our appetite and tasting good.**

Foods that contain a high amount of beneficial nutrients that confer health benefits or help prevent disease earn the specific moniker **functional foods**.

**These special foods have benefits that go beyond their basic calories and protein.** They are often high in a specific vitamin or mineral, or they supply fiber, probiotics, antioxidants or healthy fats. Functional foods can be natural — for example, salmon naturally contains heart-healthy omega-3 fats — or can be created by a food manufacturer, such as orange juice fortified with vitamin D.

**The term functional foods originated in Japan in the 1980s** and was created by government agencies to highlight foods that had exceptional health benefits. The FDA regulates health claims that can be made for foods that have functional health benefits. For example, a container of milk may say “calcium builds strong bones,” and fruit and vegetable packages can claim these items may reduce the risk of some types of cancer (due to vitamins A and C and fiber).

**Some examples of functional foods are:**

- Berries, rich in fiber, vitamins and antioxidants.
- Leafy greens, rich in calcium and vitamins A, C and K.
- Nuts and seeds, rich in vitamin E, fiber and healthy fats.
- Legumes, rich in fiber and iron.
- Fatty fish, rich in vitamin D and omega-3 fats.
- Fortified dairy foods or plant-based alternatives, rich in probiotics, calcium and vitamin D.
- Fortified cereals, rich in an array of vitamins and minerals.

**Eating functional foods** can help ensure we get enough nutrients in the diet, may help prevent nutrient deficiencies and may protect against nutrition-related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease.



## TIP of the MONTH

### Freezing Food

**Does your spring cleaning include a freezer overhaul to ensure your food is still fresh?** While freezing is a great way to preserve food, it doesn't last forever. Here's a freezer guideline for raw fresh meat, poultry and fish:

- Meat: up to 12 months.
- Whole poultry: 12 months.
- Poultry pieces: 9 months.
- Fatty fish: up to 3 months.
- Lean fish: up to 8 months.

And remember, when you freeze these items, add a **frozen on date label** so you can use it before it expires.

## Spring Herb Salad

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 4 cups salad greens                         | ¼ cup chopped fresh basil, <i>divided</i>    |
| ½ cup frozen peas, thawed                   | ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, <i>divided</i> |
| ½ cup grape tomatoes                        | 1 tbsp lemon juice                           |
| ¼ cup feta cheese, crumbled                 | 1 tbsp red wine vinegar                      |
| 2 tbsp toasted pecans                       | 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil                |
| 1 cup cooked (or unsalted canned) chickpeas | ½ tsp salt                                   |



**On** a large platter, assemble salad greens. **Top** with peas, tomatoes, feta cheese, pecans, chickpeas, 2 tbsp basil and 2 tbsp cilantro. **In** a small bowl, add remaining basil, remaining cilantro, lemon, vinegar, olive oil and salt. **Whisk** to combine. **Drizzle** dressing over salad and toss to coat, then serve.

**Makes 4 servings. Per serving:** 237 calories | 7g protein | 15g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 5g mono fat | 5g poly fat | 19g carb | 2g sugar (0 added sugar) | 5g fiber | 382mg sodium

# QuikRisk™ Assessment: Do you have a healthy relationship with social media?

By Eric Endlich, PhD

**Social media can be entertaining and help connect you with faraway friends and family.** However, excessive use may be mentally harmful. How many of the following statements apply to you?



1. My social media use interferes with important responsibilities (e.g., work, school or family). T F
2. I feel an urge to spend more time on social media. T F
3. I've been unable to cut down on my social media use. T F
4. I get upset when I don't have access to social media. T F
5. My social media use has caused friction in my relationships. T F
6. I prefer being on social media even when I'm around friends or family. T F
7. Social media is my escape from problems or stress. T F
8. I feel compelled to check social media multiple times a day. T F
9. Since spending more time on social media, I've been more lonely, anxious or depressed. T F
10. I enjoy social media but am uncomfortable with in-person interactions. T F

**If you marked *True* for four or more of these statements,** consider consulting a mental health professional or refocusing part of your spare time on in-person relationships, self-care and other interests. Regularly taking breaks from social media help, too.

**Note:** This self-assessment is not a substitute for professional evaluation or treatment.



June is National Men's Health

**Month. If you're a man who too often ignores health care, you're not alone.**

Research shows about 40% of men put off medical care even when they have worrisome symptoms. If you're a guy, take control of your health. Setting health goals is key, even if they start small (such as taking a walk daily, yearly checkups and eating more vegetables). Early detection and treatment of health problems, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes and depression can save lives.

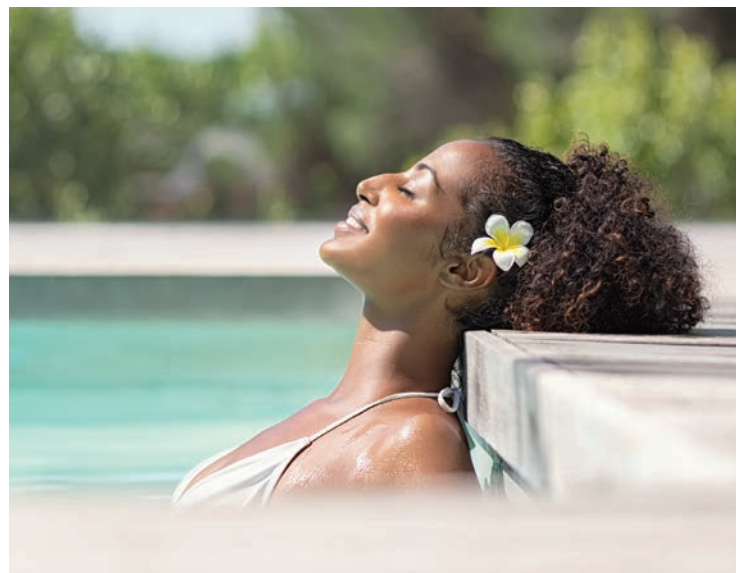
Check out the **Physical Wellness Toolkit** at [nih.gov/health-information/physical-wellness-toolkit](https://www.nih.gov/health-information/physical-wellness-toolkit) for advice on getting started.

## Why You Need Time Off

**Taking a vacation or even a few days off can benefit mental and physical health.** It can also help you be more productive at work. But if you are like millions of other working Americans, you may not even take all the paid time off your company offers. The reason is mostly fear, according to Suzanne Degges-White, PhD, Northern University professor of counseling.

**For example, many people are afraid absence from work will be seen as a negative by an employer.** There's also concern they'll miss an important work event or their workload will pile up while they take time off. But these fears are likely groundless. Research shows productivity increases when you return to work after just ten hours of time off.

**One reason regularly taking time off,** whether a couple of days or a full vacation, can boost work performance is because you'll likely feel better in the long-term — physically and mentally. You'll probably sleep better, let go of stress and the accompanying muscle tension, and return to work with fewer headaches and backaches and more energy.



**And when you add up all the potential benefits associated with taking time off,** you may find you enjoy your job more. In fact, a recent study by the CDC and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) found time off decreased the likelihood of job stress by 56%, and it more than doubled job satisfaction.



**The COVID-19 pandemic aged adolescent brains.**

The stress of school closures and separation from peers changed teen brains, according to Stanford University researchers, who compared MRI scans of 163 teen brains. Half of the scans were taken before the COVID lockdowns and half were taken afterward. The scans afterward showed accelerated signs of aging, similar to brain changes found in youngsters who've suffered abuse. The changes don't suggest serious brain disease, but the adolescents with aged brains reported heightened levels of anxiety and depression. The researchers concluded it's important to recognize that teens who experienced the lockdowns may have higher rates of these mental health problems.

**Q: Mental health self-care tips?**

**A:** For many conditions, including eating disorders, addictions, anxiety and depression, it is important to seek professional treatment, such as psychotherapy and medication. In addition to therapy, trying these winning strategies can help you cope with everyday stress or to stay mentally healthy:

- **Exercise:** A sense of well-being is one of many benefits.
- **Nutrition:** Healthy food nourishes the brain as well as the body.
- **Rest:** Recharging can build your resilience.
- **Meditation:** Start by simply paying attention to your breathing for a few minutes.
- **Gratitude:** Let people know they've made a difference; you'll both feel better.
- **Positivity:** Pay attention to what's going well in your life and the world.
- **Goal-setting:** Having something to strive toward gives life meaning.
- **Human contact:** A hug, a phone call or a visit — any of these can brighten your day.
- **Boundary-setting:** Knowing when to say **no** helps you avoid getting overwhelmed.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



**Dance for Health and Happiness**

**Regardless of your age and ability, you can enjoy dancing in many forms.**

As a physical activity, dancing may appeal to you as a fun, pleasurable exercise alternative. For fitness, dancing offers an excellent way to reduce stress; it benefits your heart, blood and circulation.

**In addition to boosting heart health,** a 20-minute dance routine just three times a week can significantly strengthen your physical and mental fitness — as it improves endurance and muscle, bone and core health. The more up-tempo the dance style, the more calories you will burn.

**Pretty much any style of dance gets your heart pumping.** You might start by choosing a routine based on your favorite music and moves — such as jazz, contemporary, ballroom, tap, hip-hop and more.

**Getting started:** Consider signing up for a class at your local gym or nearby dance studio or enjoy virtual classes in your living room. Use these tips to get the most out of kicking up your heels:

- Learn instructors' qualifications and experience.
- Check out the studio's condition (floating floors in a dance room are best for dancers).
- Comparison-shop for reasonable pricing.
- Consider training options, especially if you're a beginner.

**Dancing — even if you think you're not coordinated —** can definitely be fun and enjoyable, rewarding you with better physical and mental health. It's also a great activity to do with your partner or spouse, and a good way to meet new people.

## Q: Do I need to weigh myself daily?

**A:** The answer depends on your goals. Daily weighing might be beneficial if you're trying to lose weight. One study found those who weighed themselves daily averaged 1.7% weight loss during one year. In contrast, those who weighed themselves once a week or less did not lose weight.

**That said, daily weighing isn't appropriate for everyone.**

Talk to your health care provider if you have an eating disorder, feel preoccupied or obsessed about weight or simply have questions. If you're trying to maintain your weight, or more frequent weigh-ins make you anxious, depressed or less motivated, or your weight fluctuates a great deal day to day, weighing yourself once or twice a week may work better.

**Weigh yourself on the same scale at the same time of day.** First thing in the morning often works best.

Alternatively, you can track how you feel, how your clothes fit, your sleep quality and energy level. You can also monitor your blood pressure, blood glucose, body fat percentage and waist measurement in addition to your weight.

**Remember, your health is more than just the number on the scale.**

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



**Don't fall for the lure of a base tan this summer.**

Any tan is a sign of skin damage. Base tans are hyped for building melanin (a substance in your body that makes pigmentation) in the skin through short sessions in the sun or a tanning bed to prevent sunburn outdoors. This isn't only a false claim, it's a potentially hazardous one. According to the National Cancer Institute, a base tan offers no protection from sunburn. However, it does promote wrinkles and increases the risk of skin cancer. For a sun-kissed look, spray on a fake bronze sunless tan. Protect your skin by limiting time in the sun, using water-resistant sunscreens with an SPF of 30 or higher and UVA and UVB protection and avoiding tanning beds.

CPR and AED Awareness Week is June 1 to 7.



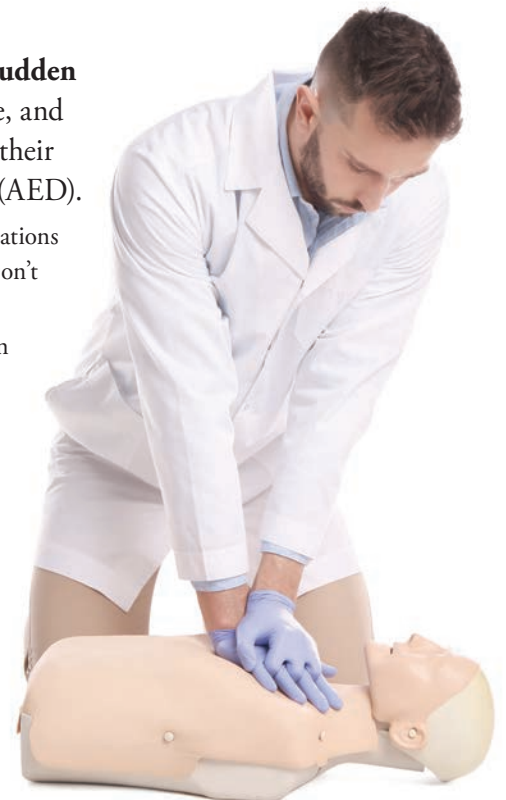
## Save a Life with CPR

**Every year, more than 350,000 Americans who are not hospitalized experience sudden cardiac arrest.** A person experiencing cardiac arrest may seem fine until they collapse, and they die within minutes unless they receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or their heart is shocked back into a normal rhythm with an automated external defibrillator (AED).

**CPR isn't complicated, but you need to know the basics. Note:** The instructions below are for situations when an AED isn't available. If someone is unconscious, call 911 or ask another bystander to do it. Don't assume someone will call unprompted.

- First, check to see if the person is breathing, has a heartbeat and is responsive. If they are not, begin CPR. If the person can breathe and/or respond, do not use CPR. Follow instructions from the 911 operator until emergency responders arrive.
- Even if you aren't trained in CPR, you can still perform chest compressions until EMTs arrive. This is hands-only CPR. Place one of your hands in the center of the person's chest with your other hand on top. Interlock your fingers, lock your elbows and start pushing down hard at about a rate of 100 compressions per minute (use the beat of the Bee Gee's song "Stayin' Alive").
- Don't attempt mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Only medical providers and others trained in the technique should administer it, according to the American Heart Association.

**Remember:** Don't hesitate to perform CPR for fear of hurting the person. Good Samaritan laws nationwide protect you from legal action if you give CPR or other emergency aid.



## How to Discuss Finances with Your Partner

Knowledge and communication are crucial to a healthy relationship, especially in personal finance. Research shows that financial stress can wreak havoc on romantic relationships.

Financial behaviors and beliefs influence daily life as well as long-term decisions. You and your partner may have different financial backgrounds and earn different incomes. Below are a few things to consider when talking about money:

**1. Communicate.** Schedule weekly meetings to review upcoming expenses to plan for costs. You'll both avoid surprises if each of you understands financial expectations for the household budget.

**2. Each person must know the other's financial goals.** Post the goals in a prominent location for frequent reminders.

**3. Pay attention to trigger words or behaviors that cause an emotional response.** Discuss possible reasons. Consider therapy to help with processing financial triggers.

**4. Trust but verify.** If the relationship is new but headed for a legal commitment, ask for copies of credit reports and financial statements; no information should be off limits.

**Prepare to talk.** Money can be a challenging topic. Make a thorough, specific list of questions before you have the conversation. Pick a time when you are both relaxed. Avoid high-stress times, when you may be more likely to argue.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, MBA

# safety solutions

June is National Safety Month.



## QuikQuiz™: Safety Savvy

How much do you know about avoiding mishaps and injuries on and off the job? Test your knowledge.

1. You can use a chair as a step stool as long as the chair has no wheels. T or F
2. You can only drive a forklift if you have been trained and pass a written test and driving test offered by your employer. T or F
3. Lockout/tagout procedures can protect you when a machine is out of production. T or F
4. As long as you wear required personal safety equipment when necessary, it doesn't matter how it fits. T or F
5. If an unknown dog barks or seems aggressive, turn and run in a zig-zag pattern in the opposite direction. T or F

### ANSWERS:

1. False — A chair is meant for sitting and can tip or move easily. Use a proper step stool.
2. True — OSHA requires that all forklift drivers have proper training and certification.
3. True — Lockout/tagout procedures ensure that dangerous equipment is properly shut off to protect you from hazardous energy sources when machines and equipment are being maintained or repaired.
4. False — Personal safety equipment must fit correctly to protect you.
5. False — Remain quiet and still. If you can, back away slowly. Avoid direct eye contact.



June is Home Safety Month.



## Surprising Dirty Spots in Your Home

The bathroom isn't the only place you'll find dirt and germs lurking.

Here are some surprising and not-so-surprising areas to inspect:

**Kitchen sponges and dishcloths:** Kitchen sponges often are the most bacteria-laden, followed by dishcloths. It's recommended that they are sanitized after each use. **Tip:** Place wet sponges in a microwave oven for two minutes every day and replace every two weeks. Wash dishcloths every other day.

**Kitchen sink and strainer:** Clean once or twice a week with a disinfecting cleaner. Wash strainers in the dishwasher once a week.

**Toothbrush holder:** If you have a freestanding toothbrush holder, wash it in a sanitizing dishwasher or hand wash it with soapy water once or twice a week. **Tip:** Clean with a disinfecting wipe in between.

**Your pet's dishes:** Most people don't think about washing their pet's bowls, but you should clean them as you do your own dishes — in a dishwasher or with hot soapy water, daily.

**The coffeemaker's reservoir:** Follow manufacturer's recommendations on cleaning to avoid bacteria buildup.

**Grout:** To prevent mold and mildew, clean grout with a specially made grout brush and equal parts vinegar and water or make a paste from hydrogen peroxide and baking soda.

**Air vents:** These, like air filters, can collect a lot of nasty stuff, including pet dander, bug debris, dirt and hair. Use your vacuum attachments to suck up the dirt from your registers, including the ducts. A stiff bristle brush will also work; wear a mask while cleaning to prevent breathing in particles.

**Your keyboard:** Your laptop or computer keyboard holds all types of germs. Use canned air or dust cleaner to get debris and dust out. Use screen wipes carefully to remove stubborn debris and grime. Never spray cleaner or use overly wet wipes to clean. **Tip:** Don't eat near your computer.

**Faucet handles:** Kitchen and bathroom faucet handles are often overlooked. Clean them daily with a disinfectant wipe.





# Medication Interactions

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

**A drug interaction is a reaction between two or more drugs or between a drug and certain foods, beverages or supplements.** Medical conditions can also interact with drugs. These interactions may affect your health by changing how a drug works or inducing side effects. Keep a lookout for the four main types of drug interactions.

**1. Drug-drug interactions** occur when two or more drugs react with each other. This may increase or decrease the action of a drug or lead to undesirable side effects. **Examples:** Mixing a sedative with an antihistamine can slow reaction time and make driving a car or operating machinery more dangerous. Acid-reducing agents, such as proton pump inhibitors, can reduce the absorption of medications that require stomach acidity, such as the antifungal drug ketoconazole.

**2. Drug-food interactions** result from drugs reacting with foods or beverages. Food can affect the absorption of some medicines and increase or decrease the drug's blood level. Depending on the medicine, the change in blood level may be helpful or harmful. **Examples:** Mixing alcohol with antihistamines or painkillers may cause drowsiness or slowed reactions. Cholesterol-lowering medications called statins, or drugs used to treat depression, may interact with grapefruit or grapefruit juice.

**Tip:** Medicine directions often specify whether to take the medicine with food or on an empty stomach. Some medicines can be taken with or without food because food does not affect its absorption.

**3. Drug-supplement interactions** can happen when reactions occur between drugs and dietary supplements, herbal remedies or botanicals. **Examples:** Acid reducers, such as omeprazole or ranitidine, can decrease the absorption of supplemental calcium, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and other minerals. Salt substitutes or supplements high in potassium can create dangerously high blood potassium levels when combined with captopril, lisinopril, triamterene and certain other drugs used to treat hypertension.

**4. Drug-condition interactions** may occur when an existing medical condition makes certain drugs potentially harmful. Conditions, such as kidney disease, hepatitis and pregnancy, can affect how the body processes medicine. The dosing of some medicines may need to be adjusted, or the medicine might not be given at all, for people with certain conditions. **Examples:** If you have high blood pressure, you may be warned not to take a nasal decongestant since it can increase blood pressure. People with kidney disease may not be prescribed certain antiviral drugs for COVID-19.



## How to Avoid Drug Interactions

**Before taking medicines, tell your health care provider about all of the prescription and nonprescription medicines you're taking.**

Also inform your provider about your use of vitamins, nutritional supplements and herbal products. In addition, tell your provider about the medical conditions you have, such as high blood pressure, prostate disease or diabetes.

**The National Institutes of Health suggests asking your provider or pharmacist the following questions before taking a medicine:** What is the medicine used for? How should I take the medicine? While taking the medicine, should I avoid any other medicine or certain foods or beverages? Can I take this medicine safely with the other medicines I am taking? Are there any possible drug interactions I should know about? What are the signs of those drug interactions? In the case of a drug interaction, what should I do?

**Lastly, thoroughly read and follow your health care provider's instructions for taking medicine.** Read and re-read the information and directions that come with your medicine as these can change over time. The package inserts and drug labels of your medicine are often a valuable source of information about possible drug interactions.

**To learn more about drug interactions, go to [reference.medscape.com](https://reference.medscape.com) and under Tools, click on Drug Interaction Checker.**

## DR. ZORBA'S corner

### Cancer Update

**Good news about the battle against cancer:** There has been an astounding 33% drop in cancer deaths since 1991 in the U.S. Why? Less smoking and better screening for colon and breast cancer.

And there's a 65% drop in cervical cancer, thanks mostly to the HPV vaccine. The first young women to get the vaccine in middle school are now at the age when they could get cervical cancer. This cancer immunization is working. Boys and girls from age 11 up to young adults age 26 should get this anti-cancer vaccine. It's best to give it prior to the onset of sexual activity, when it's most effective against cervical cancer, vaginal cancer, cancer of the anus and many cancers of the tongue and throat. It saves lives.

But the prostate cancer incidence rate has risen by 3% annually from 2014 through 2019. The American Cancer Society estimates about 35,000 men will die from this disease in 2023. Deaths from prostate cancer are higher among Black men than any other ethnic or racial group. If you're a guy at normal risk, talk to your health care provider about screening starting at age 50. Men with a family history of prostate cancer should have the conversation earlier.

— Zorba Paster, MD

# June Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

Find out how well you know the topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ foods can be natural — for example, salmon naturally contains heart-healthy omega-3 fat — or can be created by a food manufacturer, such as orange juice fortified with vitamin D.
- 2 You can freeze fatty fish for up to \_\_\_\_\_ months.
- 3 Research shows about \_\_\_\_\_ of men put off medical care even when they have worrisome symptoms.
- 4 “\_\_\_\_\_” is a good song to use for timing of performing chest compressions during CPR.
- 5 A \_\_\_\_\_ tan offers no protection from sunburn.
- 6 Mixing a \_\_\_\_\_ with an antihistamine can slow reaction time and make driving a car or operating machinery more dangerous.
- 7 Some medicines can be taken with or without food because food does not affect its \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8 A recent study by the CDC and NIOSH researchers found \_\_\_\_\_ decreased the likelihood of job stress by 56%, and it more than doubled job satisfaction.

### Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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