



Your Health Matters

***CCMHG – Your Town, County, District, Authority
Working together for your health***

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The Last Word

Spring allergy season may be longer, stronger

Many people with spring and summer allergies may not get relief until July. This year's spring allergy season may be longer and stronger, allergists say.

Increased mean temperatures from climate change affect tree pollination, says Richard Weber, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. "We are seeing trees not only pollinate earlier but also produce more pollen," he says. Some people who are sensitive to tree pollen also may feel the effects of grass pollen as spring gives way to summer. They may get a (small) break before ragweed pollen hits in the fall.

The ragweed pollen season has grown as much as 13 to 27 days longer since 1995, found a 2011 study from the USDA. It linked the later end of the season to higher temperatures from climate change.



Weber says that with increased exposure to allergens because of longer pollen seasons, more people may become sensitized. "Older patients are coming in with new onset of hay fever," he says.

About 16.9 million U.S. adults were diagnosed with hay fever in 2011, according to the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. About 6.7 million U.S. children were reported to have hay fever.

If you have allergies, treatment includes avoidance of allergens, medication and immunotherapy, such as allergy shots. It is important to see a board-certified allergist for diagnosis and treatment.

Tips for people with allergies

Watch the pollen count. If pollen counts are high, you may want to avoid outdoor activities during early morning hours. When driving, keep your car windows closed. When you're home, keep your bedroom windows closed. Clean your air-conditioning filters regularly. If you've been outdoors, take a shower and wash your hair to get rid of any pollen.

Source: [USA Today](#)

Five Reasons to Wish Your Dentist Happy National Dentist Day



From keeping you pain-free to telling the best jokes, we're grateful for everything dentists do. Here are five reasons to thank your dentist! (National Thank Your Dentist Day was March 6th)

1. They can help prevent dental disease or detect it early enough to stop it. Dentists are trained to detect early signs of dental diseases such as tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer. People with severe gum disease may also be susceptible to developing coronary artery disease, so your dentist really has a unique ability to help prolong your life.
2. They can give you a whiter smile in mere minutes! In a couple of 30- to 60-minute office visits, your dentist can perform in-office bleaching that will make your teeth whiter and brighter for up to five years. There are many other whitening options available, but none as quick or as effective.
3. They can help your child practice good oral health from a young age. Your child's first dental visit should occur by age 1 or six months after the first tooth erupts. It's like a well-child visit to your pediatrician. At the visit, the dentist gives parents oral health information and helps your child get used to dental appointments. There's no better way to ensure that parents and their children know how important oral health is from an early age.
4. They keep you out of pain. Not only do they solve the tooth problems that ail you, modern-day dentists are extremely skilled at pain prevention during procedures.⁴ Many dentists also incorporate relaxation techniques into the exam room, including televisions and even aromatherapy.⁵
5. They tell the best jokes. Even the bad ones are good! Here's one of our favorites: What is a dentist's office?
A filling station. *Source: [Delta Dental](#)*



[Harvard Pilgrim](#) members have many money-savings options for purchasing eyeglasses, contact lenses or selecting laser vision correction. We've contracted with a number of ophthalmologists and optometrists throughout the region to bring you exceptional service and savings.

- Free Eyewear with exam
- Discounts on frames and/or lenses
- Discounts on contact lenses
- Discounts on laser vision correction
- Discounts on eyewear accessories



Sleep: From A to Zzzz

Kids will do almost anything to keep from going to bed. As adults, many of us would do anything for a good night's sleep! Most people experience trouble sleeping at some point. Stress, medication, illness, shift change at work, noise, light, even a heavy dinner can all contribute to disrupted sleep. Insomnia is more than just a few bad nights' sleep; it's difficulty falling or staying asleep most nights. Did you know that lack of sleep can increase your risk of obesity, diabetes, and depression? Get the facts in this [podcast from the CDC](#).

Think you know all about sleep? Test your knowledge with this [interactive sleep quiz](#) from the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research. Sixty years ago, doctors considered sleep simply a time of rest for mind and body. We now know that sleep is actually an active and vital period for the brain.

An estimated 70 million Americans have trouble sleeping. The good news is that there are treatments for most sleep disorders. The even better news is that just having regular sleep habits can help many people. Don't toss and turn in silence. It's time to wake up to the vital importance of a good night's sleep! *Sources: [BCBSMA](#); [CDC](#); [NHLBI](#)*

Wellness News

Brown Bag Lecture Series

I am so happy to announce our new program which is a hands-on lunchtime program. There are two series which discuss **Family Health And Nutrition** and **Stress Reduction**. Each program is 6 consecutive weeks for 45 minutes. Below are the topics. If you or your employer are interested please let me know!

Preventing Pediatric Overweight & Obesity by Joely Edwards, MD
 Good Family Food by Kim Concra, Nutritionist, CC Cooperative Extension
 Quick Bites on the Run by Lisa Arnold, Naturopathic Doctor
 Family Nutrition and Cardiovascular Health by Joely Edwards, MD
 Families & Food: Eating Essentials 101 by Susan Bourque, RD, LDN, CC
 Cooperative Extension



Changing our Focus: Relationships with Food v. Relationships with Hunger by Jackie Corso, Corso Yoga

Intro to Stress Reduction by Adam Liss, Cape Center for Stress Reduction and Optimal Health



Daily Life Stress How You & Your Family Cope, Olivia Miller, OHM Works
 Tools to Find Your Happy Place, Jamie Nash, DC
 Good Mood Food, Kim Concra, Nutritionist, CC Cooperative Extension
 Mindfulness, Adam Liss, Cape Center for Stress Reduction & Optimal Health
 Yoga to Guide You Through Your Stressful Times, Lynnette Walker, Yoga
 Center of CC

Free Diabetes Medications/Supplies!

Good Health Gateway® Diabetes Care Rewards Program

Take Charge of your Diabetes!

We offer a simple diabetes management program that allows you to receive covered diabetes medications and supplies with \$0 co-pays/co-insurance – that means NO cost to you! Participation is FREE and absolutely confidential and voluntary.

To find out more, register on the *Good Health Gateway* website developed specifically for you at: www.GoodHealthGateway.com or call our HelpLine Advocates at 800-643-8028.

FREE Brand Name Medications!



Learn to use medications safely and effectively!

Get the most out of your pharmacy benefit!

Save money on your prescription medications!

Improve communications with your health provider!

Visit www.myMedicationAdvisor.com or call our HelpLine Advocates at 877-467-3113.

Biometric Screenings

Screenings have been fabulous so far! If your worksite has not signed up yet, please ask why and we can start planning for next year. Remember these are filled on a first come basis!



- Audiometer (Hearing Test)
- Blood Pressure/Pulse
- Bone Density
- Finding out your "Heart Age"
- Blood Glucose
- Cholesterol
- Skin Assessment - UV Damage
- Healthy Cooking Demonstration
- Waist Measurement
- Weight
- Body Mass Index



Screenings scheduled through June 30th are as follows:

Station Avenue Elementary School, April 23rd, 8:30am-1pm, Contact Cheryl Crockan
 Nathaniel H. Wixon School, April 25th, 8am-2pm, Contact Suzy Hamilton
 Edgartown Town Hall, April 29th, Contact Marilyn Wortman
 Provincetown Town Hall, April 30th, 9:30am-1pm, Contact Pamela Hudson
 Yarmouth Police Department, May 6th, 11am-2:30pm, Contact Deputy Chief Xiarhos
 Oak Bluffs Library, May 13th, Contact Sharon Jackson
 West Tisbury Town Hall, May 30th, Contact Judie Jardin, Melanie Becker or Kathy Logue

Walking Works Spring Walking Challenge

This Spring Challenge is underway and it's not just for walkers! Any sport can be recorded to keep your team on track! We have 87 registered teams consisting of 418 individuals! What a way to start the spring! We will be having weekly walks to keep everyone engaged and will have a random prize drawing for those that have participated for the entire 8 weeks. Way to go CCMHG!



The Cape Cod Municipal Health Group is continuing this successful incentive Program in 2013 and is including spouses! Cards have been mailed to your homes so no reason not to take advantage of this fabulous program!

Mammogram - \$25 gift check
 Colonoscopy - \$50 gift check
 Health Screening - chance to win one of 300 \$50 gift checks

Hot Topics

\$11,664,755

Total claim dollars spent for all members (employees and dependents) on potentially preventable diseases and conditions (Just from BCBS members) from CY2012!

A great deal of this cost could have been avoided through active employee participation in wellness programs.

Source: [BCBSMA](#)

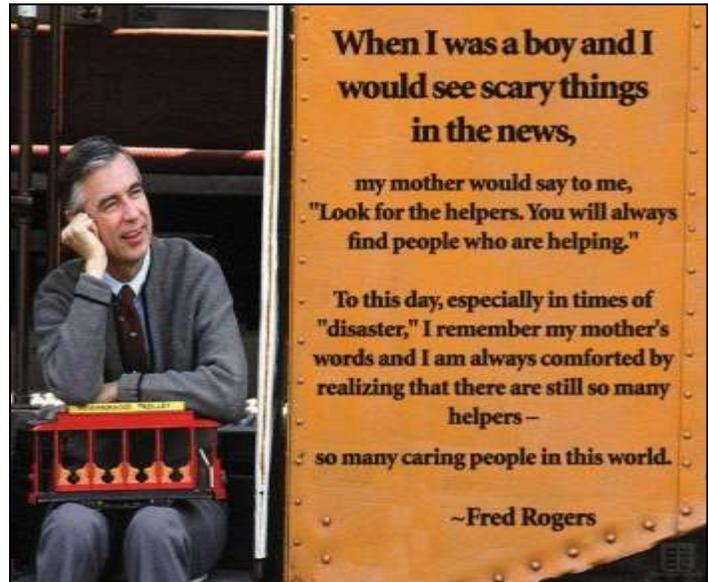
Asparagus is a very good source of fiber, folate, vitamins A, C, E and K, as well as chromium, a trace mineral that enhances the ability of insulin to transport glucose from the bloodstream into cells. Eating asparagus may help protect against and fight certain forms of cancer, such as bone, breast, colon, larynx and lung cancers. Source: [Eating Well](#)

Take a Hike!

When brain drain strikes, hit the great outdoors. Backpackers scored 50% better on a creativity test after spending four days in the woods without tech gadgets compared to those who didn't hike, a new study found. "The areas of the brain that are engaged during excessive multitasking are the same areas that seem to be restored when you're in nature," explains study co-author David Strayer, Ph.D. Immerse yourself for an hour a few times a week, he suggests and be sure to switch off your phone!

For the latest information on health and wellness in your health group like the [CCMHG Facebook Page](#) and stay connected!

Find out how to manage stress after a traumatic event by following the CDC's recommended tips for self-care on their website. Strong emotions like fear, sadness, or other symptoms of depression are normal, as long as they are temporary and don't interfere with daily activities. If these emotions last too long or cause other problems, it's a different story. Go to: www.cdc.gov/features/copingwithstress



Kids Restaurant Meals Way Too Unhealthy!

Too many kids' meals served at major chain restaurants in the United States still contain too much salt and fat and too many calories, according to a report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest. The consumer advocacy group analyzed thousands of kids' meals and found that fried chicken fingers and nuggets, french fries and sodas are the most common items offered to youngsters, USA Today reported. Some children's meals contain more than 1,000 calories. Federal government dietary guidelines recommend that children ages 4 to 10 eat 1,200 to 2,200 calories for the entire day. "This is really disappointing," Margo Wootan, director of nutrition policy for CSPI, told USA Today. "Restaurants should be doing better." She noted that there has not been much improvement since the group did a similar study in 2008. Source: [WebMD](#)

Food for thought...



Foods that Boost Your Memory

A heart-healthy diet is crucial to general health as well as to the health of memory, and compelling research has linked specific foods and their nutrients to the enhancement or preservation of memory. These foods contain flavonoids, chemical compounds that give fruits and leafy green vegetables their color. Two important flavonoids that appear to support memory function are anthocyanins and quercetin. Other nutrients that have been found to improve memory are folate and omega-3 fatty acids. Below are some of the best foods for boosting brainpower.

Berries have some of the highest concentrations of antioxidants among fruit, and all berries are rich in healthy anthocyanins and flavonols (a subgroup of flavonoids), which may help protect against the breakdown of brain cells.

Leafy greens like spinach, kale, collard greens, mustard greens, and turnip greens are loaded with folate (folic acid is the synthetic form of this nutrient that's found in supplements and fortified foods) which seems to have a direct effect on memory.

Fatty Fish are important for a healthy mind. Research suggests that when it comes to food and memory, fish should be the star of the show specifically, fatty fish like salmon, sardines, herring, and mackerel and the generous amounts of omega-3 fats they provide.

Coffee There's good news for coffee lovers: researchers found that caffeinated coffee can temporarily sharpen a person's focus and memory. One thing to keep in mind, though, is that unfiltered coffee (such as espresso, as well as coffee made in a French press) contains compounds that can raise cholesterol levels, especially in people who are already battling high cholesterol. To be safe, stick with filtered coffee, and of course, be moderate when adding milk and sugar!

For more detailed information: JoyBauer.com

Crunchy Black Bean Tacos

Adapted from [Endless Simmer](#)

Ingredients:

2 C. black beans, cooked
½ C. red onion, minced
1 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. paprika
2 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped
4-6 ounces pepper jack cheese, grated
2 Tbsp. olive oil
Pinch of salt and pepper
8-6 inch corn tortillas



1) In a medium bowl, add beans along with red onion, cilantro, and spices. Add a pinch of salt and lightly mash all of the ingredients together. Grate your cheese and have it ready as well.

2) In a large, non-stick or cast iron skillet, add a few tablespoons of oil and heat over medium-high heat. Add one corn tortilla at a time and let each get hot in the oil for a few seconds. Then add about 1/4 cup of the bean filling to one half of the tortilla. Top with a sprinkle of grated cheese. Using a spatula, carefully fold the tortilla over so it forms a shell. Press down lightly on the tortilla so it holds its shape.

3) As the first tortilla cooks, move it to the side and do a second one. Depending on the size of your pan, you should be able to get 2 or 3 tacos at once. If you have a griddle you can do even more at once. Cook each taco for about 3 minutes per side until they are nicely browned and crispy. (When flipping the taco to cook on the other side use a spatula and flip the taco toward the fold so the filling doesn't fall out)

Nutritional Information: Serving Size: 2 tacos: 345 calories; 15g total fat; 4.8g saturated; 18.8mg cholesterol; 353mg sodium; 420mg potassium; 46.6g carbs; 12g fiber; 4.7g sugar; 15g protein.



Water! Water! Water!

The Little Known Benefits of this Wet Wonder

With Spring upon us (yes, it really is Spring despite how it may appear outside) our time spent outdoors increases as does our physical activity. Water helps keep you hydrated, which is important because every single cell in your body needs it in order to absorb nutrients and expel waste products. But what are some of the less well known benefits of drinking water?

1) Drinking Water Keeps You Young

It is great for your skin. If you don't drink enough, you'll suffer from dry skin, and you'll be likely to use more creams and lotions to moisturize which don't strike at the root of the problem. Drinking plenty of water keeps your skin moisturized and reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

2) Drinking Water Helps You Lose Weight

There's a reason why most diets and fitness programs ask you to drink a lot of water. One of the benefits of drinking water is that it helps you lose weight. Water suppresses your appetite, so you don't eat as much. It also prevents fluid retention, because your body won't try to retain water if it's getting enough. It also helps your body burn stored fat. If you're not drinking enough water, your liver will be forced to help your kidneys detoxify your body. When you drink plenty of water, your kidneys don't need any extra help, so your liver will be able to metabolize stored fat more efficiently. Drinking water flushes toxins from your body and prevents constipation.

3) Drinking Water Helps You Build Muscle

It makes your muscles stronger. That's because water carries oxygen to the cells of your body, including those of your muscles. Drinking plenty of water enables your muscles to work harder and longer before they feel tired, and this can help you build muscle.

4) Drinking Water Makes You Smarter

Your brain needs a lot of oxygen in order to function at optimum levels. Drinking plenty of water ensures that your brain gets all the oxygen it needs. Drinking 8 to 10 cups of water per day can improve your levels of cognitive performance by as much as 30%! It ensures that your body's electrolyte levels remain high enough to allow your nerves to relay messages to and from the brain in the way they were meant to.

5) Drinking Water Is Good for Your Joints

It helps keep your joints strong, healthy and lubricated. Your joints need moisture in order to remain strong and flexible, so that your movements are smooth and pain free.

Sources: [WebMD](#), [FitDay](#)

Looking for a switch from “plain old water”? Try “Sassy Water” it offers healthy ingredients with a yummy taste that will have you enjoying all 8 glasses!

Directions:

Mix together 8.5 glasses of water, 1 sliced lemon, 1 peeled and thinly sliced cucumber, 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger, and one handful of mint leaves. Leave in refrigerator overnight. Strain in the morning and enjoy throughout the day. Complete with only 50 calories, 3.8 grams of fiber, and 75% of the RDA of Vitamin C!



Meditation

Want to soak up the mind-body perks of meditation? Don't just sit in the lotus position waiting for the magic to happen? Pick the method that makes you feel the most comfortable and you'll be more likely to stick with it a recent San Francisco State University study found. Here, author Adam Burke, Ph.D., distinguishes between four popular types used in the study.



MINDFULNESS Awareness of your experience in the moment with a gentle focus on a specific aspect, like breathing.
TRY IT Download the *Headspace on the Go* app (free for the first 10 session, iTunes) or read *Get Some Headspace*, both by Andy Puddicombe.



QIGONG Visualization of light traveling from the base of the spine to the head and back again in conjunction with breathing.
TRY IT Learn more at the [National Qigong Association's website](#) and search for a teacher near you (The Yoga Center of Cape Cod in East Dennis is one local)

MANTRA Repetition of a word, line one, or sound like om, as the object of your attention.
TRY IT Follow the simple instructions from a Harvard doctor at [Mass General](#).



ZEN Similar to mindfulness but more general; an awareness of one's present experience.
TRY IT Watch a how-to video at [Yokoji Zen Mountain Center](#)

Source: *Fitness Magazine*

Your Health Matters is a quarterly publication for municipal employees and family members of the Cape Cod Municipal Health Group.

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