



# BETTERSAFE

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

## National Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month

### HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS WITH ASTHMA & ALLERGIES

#### ASTHMA

Chances are, you or someone you know has asthma or suffers from allergies. About 25 million Americans have some form of asthma, a respiratory condition that causes spasms in the bronchi of the lungs. This usually results from an allergic reaction or hypersensitivity. During an asthma attack, an individual will have trouble breathing and coughing and tightness in the chest may also occur.

#### Common symptoms of asthma include:

- » Coughing
- » Wheezing
- » Chest tightness
- » Shortness of breath and/or rapid breathing

#### Different types of asthma exist including:

- » Adult-onset asthma
- » Allergic asthma
- » Asthma-COPD Overlap
- » Exercise-Induced Bronchoconstriction (EIB)
- » Nonallergic Asthma
- » Occupational Asthma



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

Asthma is diagnosed by a health care professional who may administer the following forms of testing: physical exam, lung function test, and chest or sinus x-ray. They will also take a detailed medical history. There is no cure for asthma, but it can be treated. A health care professional can prescribe an inhaler or nebulizer to help medicine reach your lungs. Inhalers come in a couple of different forms; a metered dose inhaler which uses an aerosol can to deliver a short burst of medicine and a dry powder inhaler which delivers a dry powder medicine. A nebulizer takes liquid medicine and turns it into a mist.

Some additional ways to help you cope include understanding what triggers your asthma and identifying what you may be allergic to. Limiting exposure to these triggers and allergens will help you reduce asthmatic reactions to them. Managing your asthma will not only improve your quality of life, but will make exercising easier as well as improve your sleep. If medicine does not improve your asthma, bronchial

thermoplasty is another treatment option. Bronchial thermoplasty is a drug free option that uses a series of procedures and a heating device to reduce excess smooth muscle in the airways.

## ALLERGIES

About 32 million Americans have food allergies and about 21 million Americans have nasal allergies, hay fever or rhinitis (swelling and irritation of mucous in the nose). Food allergies are more prevalent in children, but they have a higher chance of outgrowing food allergies. Some allergies that are more difficult to grow out of include peanut, tree nut, seed, fish, or shellfish allergies.

A food allergy is an immune response to a food protein that the body is identifying as harmful. Any food can cause an allergic reaction. The most common foods causing allergic reactions are eggs, fish, milk, peanuts, shellfish (including shrimp, crayfish, lobster, crab, clam, scallop, and muscles), soy, tree nuts (including walnuts, almonds, pecans, pistachios, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts), and wheat.

### **The following symptoms may occur during an allergic reaction:**

- » Drop in blood pressure
- » Sneezing
- » Tightening of throat or trouble breathing
- » Skin rashes including hives
- » Vomiting
- » Diarrhea
- » Itchy mouth
- » Facial swelling

If you think you are having an allergic reaction seek medical care. A health care provider will assist you in determining if you have food allergies, food intolerances, or what environmental allergies you have.



Anaphylaxis is a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction and medical care should be sought immediately. It can occur within seconds or minutes of exposure to something you're allergic to. There is also the potential for a second reaction, known as Biphasic Anaphylaxis, that can occur 6-36 hours after the first anaphylactic reaction.

If you suffer from food allergies there are precautions you can take such as checking food labels and asking restaurant staff about food ingredients. Taking time to ask clarifying questions is always worth your time in order to best protect your health. If you think you may have a food allergy, consult with your health care provider to assess next steps.

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# DAY IN DAY OUT

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

## Skin Cancer Awareness Month

### STAYING SAFE IN THE SUN

May is skin cancer awareness month. Skin cancer is preventable and treatable, however, 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer by age 70. Understanding the risks is important for prevention and treatment. There are many steps that can be taken to reduce risks of skin cancer, including:

- » Avoiding tanning and sunburns
- » Seeking shade
- » Using a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher

If you plan to be spend time outdoors this summer, plan on covering up by using hats and sunglasses and applying sunscreen 30 minutes prior to going outside.

Skin cancer is the aggressive growth of abnormal cells starting in the epidermis or outer layer of skin. When unrepaired DNA damage occurs, it triggers skin cell mutations, or the rapid multiplying of skin cells, and can form malignant tumors. Three major types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma, each named for the types of cells in the epidermis where the cancer cells form. UV exposure from the sun and tanning booths is the main risk factor for melanoma skin cancer. UV exposure is preventable and being safe in the sun can help reduce your risks of UV exposure. Use an SPF of 30 or higher, wear sun protective clothes, and seek shade while outside. Remember sand, water, and snow can reflect sun and intensify UV rays. UV rays can still intensify on cloudy days, so continue taking the



necessary precautions. There are additional ways to prevent skin cancer including checking your skin for cancer through a self-exam. Look for any new spots on your skin or spots that vary from others on your skin. If spots are bleeding or itching seek care from a healthcare professional. Make sure you examine all surfaces of your skin and use a mirror for hard to see spots such as your back. Don't forget to examine your scalp and feet. Self-exams are important and help in early detection of skin cancer.

Melanoma is considered the most serious skin cancer as it can spread to other parts of the body and does not only impact the skin. Melanoma can appear suddenly or develop from a mole on the skin. American Academy of Dermatology Association



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recommends that everyone learn the ABCDEs of Melanoma in order to identify the signs.

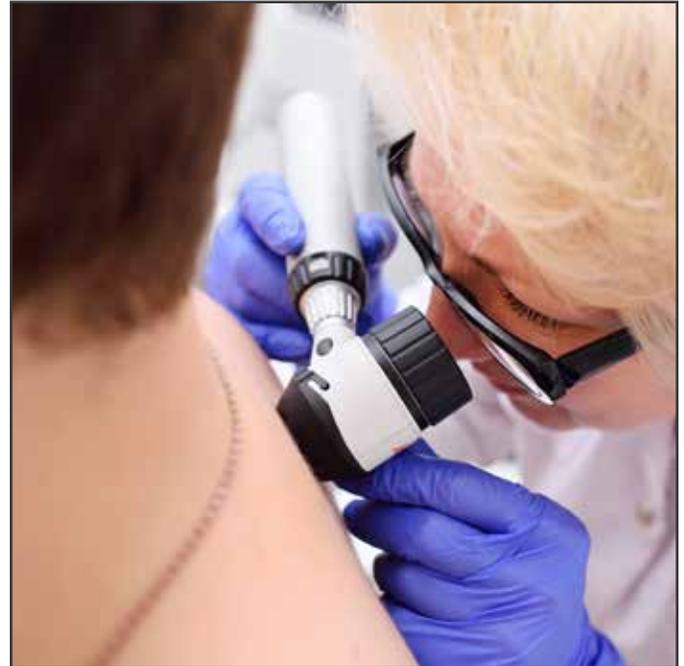
- » A is for Asymmetry: One half of the mole does not match the other half.
- » B is for Border irregularity: The edges are ragged, notched, or blurred.
- » C is for Color that varies from one area to another.
- » D is for Diameter: While melanomas are usually greater than 6mm (the size of a pencil eraser) when diagnosed, they can be smaller.
- » E is for Evolving: A mole or skin lesion that looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape, or color

*(The American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2020)*

If detected early, melanoma is treatable. Knowing and looking for the signs is important for early detection and receiving effective treatment.

If you are diagnosed with skin cancer there are options for treatment. These options include treatment for all types of skin cancer including, actinic keratosis treatment, basal cell carcinoma treatment, melanoma treatment, merkel cell carcinoma treatment, and squamous cell carcinoma treatment. Treatment options may include targeted therapy, chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, prescription creams and surgical removal if possible.

While planning and packing for your summer trips, make sure to add items to your bag that will help you enjoy safe fun in the sun!



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# TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

## High Blood Pressure

### IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a common cardiovascular condition. Blood pressure is the pressure of blood pushing against the artery walls, while high blood pressure (hypertension) is when blood pressure is higher than normal. This condition can be found in men and women of any age and ethnicity, but is more commonly found in men and generally more with non-Hispanic black adults than non-Hispanic white adults. To be diagnosed with high blood pressure, you must have multiple consistent readings. Having a high reading here or there is normal as many factors can affect blood pressure.

Risk factors that can increase chances of developing high blood pressure include:

- » Family History - chances increase when close blood relatives have high blood pressure.
- » Age - blood vessels gradually lose their elastic quality which increases the risk of high blood pressure as we age.
- » Gender - Men under 55 are more likely to develop high blood pressure, while for women the risk is higher over 55.
- » Race - African Americans have a higher risk than any other ethnicity.
- » Pre-existing Medical Conditions - Diabetes, high



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cholesterol, sleep apnea, pregnancy can all increase risk of high blood pressure

- » Modifiable Factors - Lifestyle choices such as lack of physical activity, an unhealthy diet, being overweight or obese, drinking too much alcohol, smoking and tobacco use, and too much stress can increase risk of high blood pressure.

At least once a year, individuals three years of age and up should have their blood pressure checked by their health care provider. Blood pressure is considered high if you have consistent systolic readings of 140 mm HG or higher or diastolic readings of 90 mm Hg or higher. Systolic pressure is the amount of pressure in your arteries during the contraction of the heart muscle and will appear as the top number in a blood pressure reading. The diastolic reading, which appears as the bottom number, is the pressure in the arteries when the heart rests between beats. This is the time when

the heart fills with blood and gets oxygen. The blood pressure test involves a stethoscope and inflatable cuff with a gauge. Before you receive your blood pressure test avoid activities that may raise your blood pressure so you can receive an accurate measure. Activities to avoid before a blood pressure test include exercising, drinking caffeinated beverages, eating or smoking cigarettes 30 minutes prior to the test. During the test keep your feet flat on the floor and rest your arm on a table if possible. Try to relax and breathe during the test.

Unlike other diseases, there is not a list of symptoms for high blood pressure. It is largely a symptomless ‘silent killer.’ That is why it is so important to monitor your blood pressure regularly as you may not even realize that you have it. If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, your healthcare provider will assist you with a treatment plan and can help you to best manage your condition. Your treatment plan may include prescribed medication or lifestyle changes such as tobacco cessation, physical activity, eating nutritious heart-healthy foods and maintaining a healthy weight.

When it comes to eating heart-healthy, your healthcare provider may recommend the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet. The DASH diet was developed specifically to lower high blood pressure and is low in sodium, cholesterol, and total and saturated fats. It is high in vegetables, fruits, fiber, low-fat dairy products, and potassium. Individuals who use the DASH diet have lowered their blood pressure and LDL cholesterol (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 2020).



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# TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

## When It's Time to Quit

### GIVING UP TOBACCO

May 31<sup>st</sup> is World No Tobacco Day. The World Health Organization, along with other global partners, created the day to help put an end to tobacco use and raise awareness on the harmful and potentially deadly impacts associated with tobacco. The day also aims to educate about secondhand smoke exposure and to encourage individuals to eliminate the use of tobacco in all forms. The day focuses on advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption and calls for stakeholders to take action in the fight for tobacco control. The main objective for World No Tobacco Day 2020 is to engage in counter-marketing campaigns to empower individuals to fight Big Tobacco by providing information regarding tobacco myths and exposing marketing manipulation.

Quitting tobacco is good for your health and good for environment as well. Tobacco smoke causes air pollution and contains numerous chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer. Tobacco smoke can remain in the air for up to five hours and cause individuals to be at risk for lung cancer, chronic respiratory disease, and reduced lung function. Tobacco smoking is the main cause for lung cancer while secondhand smoke increases risk for lung cancer. Chronic respiratory disease includes chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), for which tobacco smoking is the leading cause. COPD is a condition where there is a buildup of mucus in the lungs. This can cause a painful cough and poor breathing conditions. Tobacco can also exacerbate early asthma.

Perhaps you are fully aware of the damaging repercussions of tobacco but are having trouble



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quitting. Tobacco use is not only a physical habit, but a psychological habit as well. Nicotine provides a temporary and addictive high and it can be hard to eliminate the feeling and habit. Take time to address the addiction as well as the daily habits you have created regarding tobacco use. Where should you start? What are your options?

#### **Here are some ways to set yourself up for success:**

- » Set your quit date and share it with family and friends as a way to create accountability.
- » Reflect on the boundaries and challenges you may face during the quitting process. Being aware of potential boundaries to your success will help you determine potential solutions.
- » Identify triggers in your life that cause you to want to use tobacco.

- » Remove cigarettes and tobacco products from your surroundings.
- » Plan to speak with your healthcare provider about your plans to quit.
- » Create goals for yourself and plan rewards for when you meet your goals

There are many products and programs in place to support you in quitting tobacco. One option is medication, which can reduce cravings and symptoms of withdrawal. Discuss with your healthcare provider if this option is right for you. There are several options available including nicotine replacement therapy and non-nicotine medication. Nicotine replacement therapy uses nicotine substitutes including, gum, patches, lozenges, inhalers, and nasal sprays. These products can help relieve withdrawal symptoms. Non-nicotine medications are medications that will help you reduce cravings and are used as short-term options.

While quitting may feel overwhelming, you can find options that work for you. Discuss options with your healthcare provider and consider asking family members, friends, and colleagues for support and accountability!



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