



Wellness Newsletter

May is Arthritis Awareness Month.

May is Arthritis Awareness Month. Arthritis is a painful disease that impacts more than 50 million Americans, making it the number one cause of disability in the country. There are more than 100 types of arthritis and related conditions. Osteoarthritis (OA), sometimes called degenerative joint disease, is the most common. OA occurs when the cartilage or cushion between joints breaks down, leading to pain, stiffness and swelling. Common risk factors include increasing age, obesity, previous joint injury, overuse of the joint, weak thigh muscles, and genes. You may not be able to control all of the risk factors for OA, but maintaining a healthy weight and getting regular physical activity are two ways you can decrease your risk. For more information, go to www.arthritis.org.



Hookah Dangers

Compared to one cigarette, one hookah session gives the smoker two to four times the amount of nicotine, 100 times more tar, 17 times the amount of formaldehyde and 7 to 11 times more carbon monoxide. In addition, a recent study found that “light” hookah smokers – those who smoked about 3 bowls per week for fewer than 5 years – had cell abnormalities in their airways, lower respiratory tract and blood vessels. Don’t be fooled by the fact that hookah smoke is filtered through water. Hookahs are bad news.



Spring Allergies

Allergies got you down? Here are some helpful tips:

- Monitor pollen and mold counts. These are often provided in weather reports.
- Keep windows and doors shut at home and in your car during allergy season, and try to stay inside at midday and during the afternoon, when pollen counts are highest.
- When doing outdoor chores, take appropriate medication beforehand, wear a N95 filter mask rated by the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and afterwards, take a shower, wash your hair and change your clothes.
- Ask your healthcare provider about over-the-counter medications that may help to minimize symptoms, and ask about allergy shots to help your body develop tolerance to allergens.



Karen’s Wellness Corner

When I’m going through a bad stretch, whether it’s health-related, interpersonal, or financial, one of the ways that I cope is by thinking “what’s the lesson to be learned from this?” Some folks subscribe to the saying “things happen for a reason.” That doesn’t ring true for me – I don’t believe that bad things are *intended* to happen to anyone. But bad things unfortunately *do* happen. When they do, they carry with them opportunities for personal growth – lessons to be learned. I can choose to look for that lesson, and carry the insight with me through life, or I can choose to ignore the lesson and be bitter. Sometimes the lesson may have nothing to do with the current problem – maybe a health issue presents an opportunity to ask for, or receive, help. For some people, that doesn’t come easily. Sometimes the lesson isn’t clear until well after the bad times are over. I made a job decision about 10 years ago that still doesn’t make sense, but I’m sure there’s a lesson in there somewhere! Maybe the lesson is simple and humbling, like accepting your own shortcomings. Whatever your struggles this month, I hope you discover the “silver lining” that helps you become your best self. And hang in there!



Karen DeBonis
R&K Wellness Director

The Price of Vanity

There is growing concern about the chemicals in our make-up and personal care products. Surprisingly, there's very little regulation of these products by the FDA. Four chemicals are most concerning because they are *hormone disrupters* – they may interfere with the body's natural hormones. These chemicals are: *phthalates*, *parabens*, *triclosan*, and *oxybenzone*. These substances are also found in home-care products, but personal care products are of more concern because we apply them directly to our skin, inhale them as fragrances, and even ingest them in small amounts, in the case of lipstick.

Check the labels on your personal care products for *parabens*, *triclosan*, and *oxybenzone* and consider switching brands if necessary. You usually won't see *phthalates* listed since it's often used as a fragrance, which is considered proprietary, so manufacturers don't have to list it. Instead, avoid products that list "fragrance" or "parfum" unless they specifically state that they are phthalate-free. Two websites contain useful information to help you make the safest choices: the [Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/) database: www.ewg.org/skindeep/ and the [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](http://www.safecosmetics.org): www.safecosmetics.org.



Products free of hormone disrupters are more readily available in online businesses and in home-sales, rather than at your local retailers, and they may cost you a little more. However, some stores are starting to carry safer products. It's worth the time to seek them out, and ask for – or demand – them.

Child Poisoning

Almost 600,000 children in the US are accidentally poisoned by medicines annually. Don't let your child become one of them. Be sure to store your medicine in locked cabinets or out of reach of children. Request child-proof caps on all prescriptions if you have small children in your home. And if children spend time at a grandparents, be sure to child-proof their medications as well. Finally, put the poison control number in your

phone and hope you will never need to use it:

1-800-222-1222.



No Small Loss

If you're overweight or obese, the mere idea of losing a significant amount of weight may seem daunting. However, losing just 5% of your total weight can reduce your risk for Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. If you weigh 200 pounds, a 5% loss would be 10 pounds. If that sounds more manageable, do it, and make it last! Don't make any extreme dietary changes, just cut out a few of the high-calorie foods that you would miss the least, and engage in activities that keep you moving. This way, you're establishing a new, healthier lifestyle. Who knows, it may feel so good that you decide to lose another 5%!



Singin' in the Rain

Research shows that singing can:

-  Improve breathing in some people with asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).
-  Reduce certain stress hormones or improve levels of some immunity-related factors.
-  Delay the onset of some age-related cognitive problems.



So whether you sing in the rain or in the sun, in the shower or for fun, it's music to your body and soul!



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