National Health Observances

APRIL | 2018

Alcohol Awareness Month
Autism Awareness Month
Defeat Diabetes Month
Donate Life Month
Occupational Therapy Month
Sexually Transmitted Infections Awareness Month
Women’s Eye Health and Safety Month
Public Health Week (2–8)
Alcohol Screening Day (5)
Health Day (7)
Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week (8–15)
Healthcare Decisions Day (16)
Infant Immunization Week (21-28)
Medical Fitness Week (23–29)
A hernia occurs when an organ or fatty tissue squeezes through a weak spot in a surrounding muscle or connective tissue called fascia. Those affected by hernia may be born with a weakness there, or the weakness may develop over time later in life. A hernia developing in the abdomen is extremely common. Babies, children, and adults get them. Most of the time, hernias are found in men over 40.

Anything that causes an increase in pressure in the abdomen can cause a hernia, including:

- Lifting heavy objects without stabilizing the abdominal muscles
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Persistent coughing or sneezing

In addition, obesity, poor nutrition, and smoking, can all weaken muscles and make hernias more likely.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

The majority—three-quarters—of abdominal wall hernias are in the groin (the groin region is the lower abdomen). The first sign of a hernia is a small bulge from the lower abdomen. You may notice it only when you stand up, cough, jump, or strain. That’s because those activities increase the pressure within your abdomen. That increased pressure can make a part of your intestine pop out of an area of weakness. When you lie down, the bulge may go away.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

If you think you may have a hernia, ask your doctor. A doctor can usually detect a hernia during a physical exam. Your doctor can rule out other conditions that cause bulges or lumps.

If the bulge is very soft, your doctor...
may be able to massage the intestine back into the abdomen. A small, soft hernia that does not cause pain may not need treatment right away. The doctor may suggest watching and waiting for changes, like pain, to develop. If a hernia is painful or large, your doctor may suggest you see a surgeon for advice. You may need surgery to repair the hernia.

If your doctor can’t massage the intestine back into the abdomen, that means it’s trapped. A trapped intestine is dangerous because its blood supply can be cut off or strangulated. A strangulated hernia can be very serious and even life threatening. Symptoms include severe pain that doesn’t go away, nausea, and vomiting.

Surgery is usually needed if the intestine is trapped—and emergency surgery if it’s strangulated. A hernia is one of the most common reasons for surgery in the United States. It’s a successful and low-risk procedure done hundreds of thousands of times a year in the United States.

If you think you may have a hernia, talk with your doctor. Keep in mind that anyone with sudden pain in the groin should immediately seek medical help.

If you have a hernia, try to keep it from getting worse:

» Avoid heavy lifting when you can. Lifting puts stress on the groin.

» When you must lift, don’t bend over. Lift objects by using the legs, not the back.

» Eat high-fiber foods and drink plenty of water. This helps prevent constipation and straining during bowel movements.

» Maintain a healthy body weight.

Source: https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/12/battling-bulging-hernia
Diabetes is a serious disease that happens when your body has trouble managing and using blood glucose, a sugar that your body uses as fuel.

With close to 29 million U.S. adults living with type 2 diabetes and a staggering 86 million in danger of being diagnosed, the need to start making healthy choices is more critical than ever. To be sure, our everyday behaviors can determine if we develop this serious condition or not. Data from the Nurses’ Health Study suggests that 90 percent of type 2 diabetes can be attributed to lifestyle choices including excess weight, lack of exercise, a less-than-healthy diet and smoking. And a more recent study published in *PLoS Medicine* indicates that diet, in particular, may play a key role in diabetes prevention. The study followed more than 200,000 people over a 20-year period and found that:

» People who chose diets that were predominately of plant-based foods developed type 2 diabetes 20% less often than the rest of the study subjects.

» For those with the very healthiest plant-based diets (including fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, and whole grains), the reduction in type 2 diabetes was 34%.

» Those who made less healthy choices (such as sugar-sweetened beverages and refined grains) developed type 2 diabetes 16% more often than the rest.

It’s important to note that you can follow a healthy diet all your life and still develop diabetes. And not everyone who chooses an animal-based diet that is high in refined sugars will develop diabetes. However, the data does show that healthy dietary choices play a strong role diabetes prevention.

**WHAT YOU CAN START DOING TODAY**

You can start making healthier diet choices this very minute and it’s not as hard as you may think! Try by incorporating as many of these strategies as you can:

» **Include at least one fruit or veggie at every meal.** Even better, try to fill up half your plate with produce. Fruits and vegetables are rich in dietary fiber, antioxidants and vitamins and minerals, and can offer protection against developing type 2 diabetes.
Swap refined carbs for whole grains. There is convincing evidence that diets rich in whole grains protect against diabetes, whereas diets rich in refined carbohydrates (white bread, crackers, chips, etc.) lead to increased risk. Brown rice, quinoa, oats and bulgur are all excellent sources of whole grains.

Reduce your intake of saturated fat, sodium and added sugar. This could mean having lean turkey instead of a ribeye steak. And reducing your consumption of processed foods is a key way to reduce the amount of added sugars and sodium you eat. Read nutrition labels so you know what you’re eating.

TYPES OF DIABETES

How people with diabetes manage their blood glucose levels depends, in part, on the type of diabetes they have. The most common are type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes.

With type 1 diabetes, your body doesn’t make enough of a hormone called insulin. Insulin signals the body’s cells to let glucose inside. The body can’t produce enough insulin because the immune system, your body’s defense against germs and foreign substances, mistakenly attacks and destroys the cells in your pancreas that make insulin.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common. It occurs when either your body’s cells have trouble using insulin or your body doesn’t produce enough insulin to handle the glucose in your blood.

Both types can develop at any age. Type 1 is most often diagnosed in children and young adults, while type 2 shows up most in middle-age and older people. Gestational diabetes occurs only during pregnancy, but increases your chances of developing type 2 later in life.

Diabetes symptoms can vary by type. Some shared symptoms include increased thirst, hunger, and urination. Symptoms of type 1 can start quickly, over a few weeks. Type 2 symptoms tend to develop slowly over years, making them less noticeable.

Source: https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/12/managing-diabetes

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

» What type of diabetes do I have?
» How do I best manage my type of diabetes?
» How and when do I test my blood sugar?
» What are the benefits and risks of any medications or treatments?
» Can you suggest a healthy meal plan and safe ways to be more active?
» How often should I schedule checkups?
» Are there new technologies that can help me manage my type of diabetes?
A stroke is a sudden stop of blood supply to the brain. Sound frightening? That’s because it is. In mere minutes a stroke could change your life, causing memory and cognitive loss and physical debilitation.

4 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

The good news is that you can do a lot to lower your chances of having a stroke or preventing another if you’ve already had one. Although you can’t control every factor that increases your odds (age, family history, gender) there are several key items you can keep in check to greatly reduce your chances of having a stroke:

Know your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke, so knowing your numbers is the first and perhaps most important step to help prevent a stroke. An optimal blood pressure is anything at or below 120/80 mm Hg. Talk and work with your doc if your blood pressure is not in this range.

High blood cholesterol also puts you at an increased risk for stroke. An ideal total cholesterol is less than 200mg/dL. Everyone over the age of 20 should have their cholesterol measured at least once every five years.

Do everything you can to quit smoking if you smoke. Research shows that cigarette smoking is another top risk factor for stroke. The nicotine, carbon monoxide and other chemicals in cigarettes damage your cardiovascular system, increasing the odds of stroke. Your doctor can prescribe treatments to help you quit.

Choose monosaturated fats over the saturated kind. Diets high in saturated and trans fats, which can be found in red meats, lard, cream and processed foods can raise blood cholesterol levels. Moderate amounts of monosaturated fats on the other hand can actually help keep your cholesterol in check and are found in vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and some fish.

Get moving. Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can decrease your risk. Try to get a total of at least 30 minutes of activity on most or all days.
**SIGNS & SYMPTOMS**

Knowing the signs and symptoms of a stroke is the first step to ensuring medical help is received immediately. According to the National Stroke Association, for each minute a stroke goes untreated and blood flow to the brain continues to be blocked, a person loses about 1.9 million neurons. This could mean that a person’s speech, movement, memory, and so much more can be affected. Learn as many stroke symptoms as possible so you can recognize a stroke and act fast:

» Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body

» Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding

» Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes

» Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination

» Sudden severe headache with no known cause

**DETECTING A SILENT STROKE**

Did you know that you could have a stroke without even knowing it? These strokes are often referred to as “silent strokes”. Like a typical stroke, silent strokes cause brain damage and are caused by a loss of blood supply to the brain. However, with a silent stroke you may not have any clearly recognizable symptoms.

A brain scan performed by your doctor is the only way to determine if you’ve experienced a silent stroke. If you have a family history of stroke or notice that you’ve been experiencing unexplained memory, thinking and/or movement problems see your doctor to determine if you should be evaluated for stroke. A few silent strokes could lead to more severe strokes, so the sooner a condition is eliminated or diagnosed, the better your odds of preventing further damage.
We demand a lot out of our feet. Every day we ask them to take us wherever we need to go. You may not think about your feet much, but if they start to hurt, you’re quickly reminded how much you rely on your feet from the moment you get up until it’s time to sleep.

**A COMMON FOOT CONDITION**

If your first steps out of bed are extremely painful, you may have plantar fasciitis (fash-ee-EYE-tiss). Plantar fasciitis happens when the ligament that supports your arch is repeatedly strained, causing tiny tears. These ligament tears can lead to pain and swelling in the heel and sole of your foot.

**COMMON CAUSES**

You can develop or be more prone to plantar fasciitis condition if you:

» Are overweight

» Are on your feet all day or do a lot of walking (for your job for example)

» Walk or run a lot, but always seem to have tight calf muscles (you find it difficult to touch your toes or have limited motion in your ankles)

» Have very flat feet or very high arches

» Wear shoes that don’t fit well or are unsupportive (i.e., flip flops, canvas shoes)

**TREATMENT**

Plantar fasciitis can usually be treated with self-care. Although no single approach works best for everyone with the condition, here are some common self-care treatments that have proven effective:

**Try new activities that don’t place stress on your feet or simply give your feet a rest.** If you run every day and it’s aggravating your feet, try cutting back or switching to something like cycling or swimming until your foot feels better.
**Use ice therapy.** Apply ice to the sore area for 20 minutes three or four times a day to relieve your symptoms.

**Do stretches that target your toes, Achilles tendon and calves.** Stretches can help soothe your symptoms and they can also prevent reoccurrence (see the sidebar for a few helpful stretches).

**Invest in a pair of supportive shoes.** Look for shoes with good arch support and a cushioned sole—ask the salesperson to measure your foot and seek their recommendations. It may be helpful to put your shoes on right when you get up to help give your feet the support they need.

If self-care treatments are not easing your pain after a few weeks, you may want to see your doctor. He/she may prescribe an anti-inflammatory medication, a splint or boot for you to wear at night and/or shots of medicine (such as a steroid) in your heel.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

Each foot contains 26 bones, which form two arches.

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**TWO TOP STRETCHES FOR YOUR FEET**

**Wall Lean**

1. Lean forward against a wall with one knee straight and heel on the ground. Your other knee is bent.

2. Your heel and foot arch should stretch as you lean (it’s important to keep the knee fully extended on the side being stretched). Hold for 10 seconds, relax and straighten up.

3. Repeat 10+ times on each side.

**Toe Stretch**

1. Sit in a chair, and extend your affected leg so that your heel is on the floor.

2. Reach down and pull your big toe up and back with your hand. Then pull your toe toward your ankle and away from the floor.

3. Hold the position for at least 15 to 30 seconds.

4. Repeat 2 to 4 times a session, several times a day.
YOUTH IS THE GIFT OF NATURE, BUT AGE IS A WORK OF ART.

- STANISLAW JERZY LEC