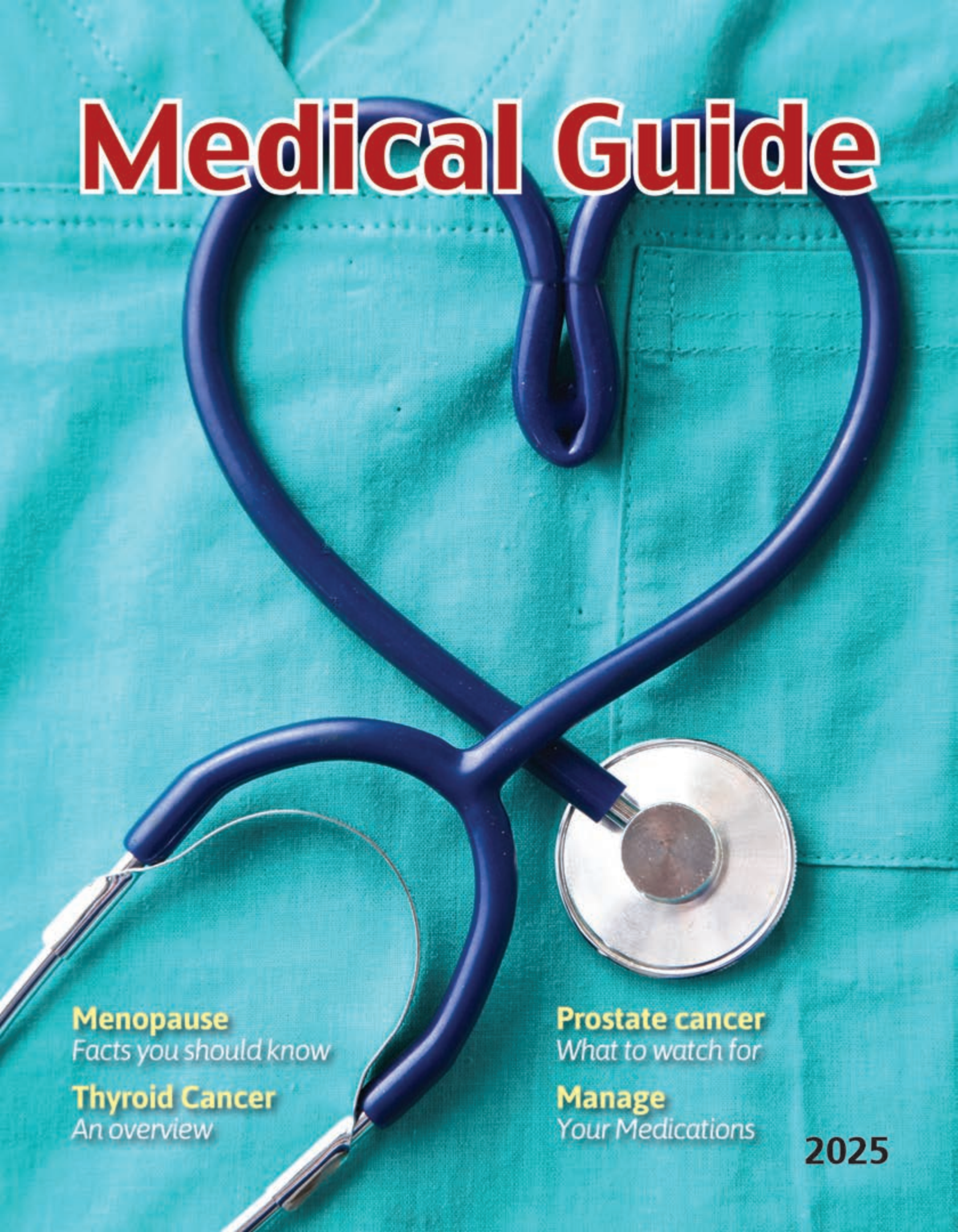


Medical Guide



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The Basics of Breast Cancer



Breast cancer is a formidable disease that affects millions of individuals each year. Data from the World Health Organization indicates 2.3 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2022, when it was the most common form of the disease in 157 of 185 countries across the globe. The impact of breast cancer goes beyond those diagnosed with the disease, affecting friends, family members, professional colleagues, and others as well. That far-reaching impact means everyone has a vested interest in learning about breast cancer.

What is breast cancer?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast grow out of control. The breast is made up of three main parts known as the lobules, ducts and connective tissue, and which type of breast cancer a person has depends on which cells in the breast turn into cancer.

Is there a typical breast cancer?

No two individuals diagnosed with breast cancer will have the same experience after being diagnosed. However, the CDC notes that most breast cancers begin in the ducts or lobules. The ducts are tubes that carry milk to the nipple and the lobules are the glands that produce milk.

What are some common risk factors for breast cancer?

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. notes gender

is the foremost risk factor for breast cancer, as the WHO reports that 99 percent of breast cancers occur in women. Additional risk factors for breast cancer include age, with two out of three women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer being older than 55, and race, as the disease affects more Caucasian women than women of other races. The NBCF also notes that women who have dense breast tissue may be at greater risk for breast cancer because such tissue can make it harder to detect lumps.

What causes breast cancer?

The NBCF notes that most women who have breast cancer will never be able to identify an exact cause behind their disease. Common risk factors like gender and age are beyond women's control, but there are some controllable risk factors that can be avoided. The WHO notes that overconsumption of alcohol and tobacco use are two such factors.

How important is early detection?

The American Cancer Society reports that the five-year survival rate for breast cancers discovered in the localized stage is 99 percent. That underscores the significance of early detection. The NBCF notes monthly breast self-exams and routine clinical exams increase the likelihood of early detection. Women are urged to speak with their physicians regarding how frequently they should be tested, as recommendations vary depending on each individual and their respective family histories. The basics of breast cancer provide insight into the disease and what women can do to reduce their risk of developing it.

Did You KNOW?

There's no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to calorie consumption, and that can contribute to some confusion as adults try to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Dietary guidelines established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services promote nutrient-dense foods and beverages, but many people prefer to know how many calories they should consume each day. Though that's understandable, the quality of the calories consumed goes a long way toward determining how nutritious a diet is. The Cleveland Clinic notes that the DHHS guidelines have historically recommended adults 21

and over consume between 1,600 and 3,000 calories per day. However, staying within those parameters does not necessarily mean a person's diet is healthy. Though individuals should keep total calorie consumption in mind when planning their diets, it's equally important to recognize what else the DHHS has to say about diet, particularly foods to avoid. The DHHS recommends limiting consumption of foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Limiting consumption of alcoholic beverages is another way to ensure your diet is working for you and not against you.



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Getting to know Chiropractic care

Chiropractic care is a holistic approach to health that focuses on the musculoskeletal system, with a particular emphasis on the spine. The core of chiropractic care is the premise that a healthy, properly aligned spine can support not only the body itself, but its natural healing abilities. Chiropractors are licensed health care professionals are often referred to as doctors of chiropractic (D.C.) According to data from the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, approximately 11 percent of adults in the United States sought chiropractic care in 2022. It is a popular form of treatment in the United States as well as Canada, where the Canadian Chiropractic Association says about 16 percent of the adult population utilizes chiropractic care annually. A significant majority use chiropractic care for pain management, including neck and back pain. The NCCIH reports that there is a growing body of evidence supporting the benefits of chiropractic care. They note it is "generally considered a safe and effective treatment for back pain." A 2018 study published in The Journal of the American Medical Association found that spinal manipulation therapy was associated with modest

improvements in pain and function for patients with acute low back pain. The hallmark of chiropractic care is chiropractic adjustment, which uses the hands or a small instrument to apply a controlled, specific force to a joint. The goal is to improve spinal motion, restore joint function and alleviate pain. Beyond spinal adjustments, chiropractors may use a variety of treatments, including massage, soft tissue therapy and corrective exercises. Some chiropractors also may provide nutritional counseling and lifestyle advice to help patients achieve overall wellness. This is common of holistic approaches, which address the root causes of patients' pain instead of just treating symptoms. Chiropractic care is a form of treatment that aims to address many issues that can affect the body.



There is no definitive age when a child may need to get eyeglasses. However, the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus notes that children's visual systems are still developing during the first 12 years of their life, and during this period wearing glasses can be important for normal vision development. Glasses can help straighten crossed or misaligned eyes, bolster weak vision caused by differences in vision between a child's eyes, and even protect the stronger eye. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children begin vision

screening around age 3 and receive annual screenings each year at ages 4, 5 and 6. After that, screening is recommended when children turn 8, 10, 12, and 15. Of course, parents who begin to suspect their children are having trouble with their vision are urged to take the child to an ophthalmologist once such suspicions arise. Some notable signs include inexplicable declines in academic performance, children sitting closer to the television than they once did and children's own remarks regarding their vision if they say anything at all.

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Safe medication management strategies

Medications are necessary to manage health conditions, improve quality of life and prevent illnesses. According to the National Health Interview Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American adults between the ages of 18 and 64 take an average of 3.9 prescriptions per person per year. Those age 65 and older take an average of 5.1 prescriptions per year.

It is essential to manage medications properly to avoid serious health risks. Medications can interact with one another and cause adverse drug reactions when paired with over-the-counter products and even certain foods and beverages. Drugs.com reports drug interactions are a major cause of hospitalizations and side effects. A 2024 study published in Scientific Reports found that 5 percent of hospitalizations among patients age 65 and older (78 being the median patient age) were caused by side effects associated with polypharmacy (multiple medication use). This underscores the importance of managing medications properly. The following is a guide to help manage medications effectively.

Know your medications

The first step in safe medication use is to be fully vetted about every medication taken. This includes the brand and generic name, dosage, frequency of dosage, timing of taking the drug, how it should be administered, side effects, storage, and interactions. It's important to keep an updated list of all medications taken,

including vitamins, supplements and OTC drugs to share with each health



care provider at every appointment.

Follow directions

Strictly adhere to the information on the medication label and any instructions provided by the doctor or nurse. Never alter dosage volume or frequency without first consulting a health care provider. Complete a full course of antibiotics even after symptoms improve to prevent antibiotic resistance. Do not share medications with others or take someone else's prescriptions.

Communicate effectively

Open a dialogue with health care providers to get further clarification about medications and questions that come up. Report side effects promptly and inquire about alternative medications that may be available. Also communicate if the cost of a specific drug is prohibitive, as failing to take a medication due to cost can be a health risk.

Keep organized

Utilize an effective system for storing and organizing medications to prevent missed or accidental double doses. Use reminders on smartphones or health trackers to remember when to take medication doses. Always store drugs in their original containers, away from children and pets. Safely discard old medications when the expiration date has passed. Many communities offer drug take-back programs, and the Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.org) provides instructions on how to dispose of certain medications where take-back programs are unavailable.

Ask for help

Anyone who is experiencing difficulty managing medications should reach out to a relative, friend or caregiver service for assistance. Managing medications safely is a vital component of senior health care.

The straight truth on orthodontic care

Families often are introduced to orthodontic care when children are examined and then referred to an orthodontist by the family dentist. Orthodontics focuses on correcting misaligned jaws and teeth, known as malocclusion. This improves appearance and also is essential for health and proper oral function.

Who needs an orthodontist?

The Cleveland Clinic says a person may have to see an orthodontist if they have crooked, overlapped, twisted, or gapped teeth. Misaligned teeth can have a significant effect on oral health. Teeth that are not straight can increase risk for cavities, gum disease and tooth erosion. While many orthodontic issues are addressed in childhood, adults also can benefit from consultation with an orthodontist. Smile Central Dental says 50 to 70 percent of children and adolescents are expected to need ortho-

odontic treatment. According to Humana, 25 percent of the more than four million Americans wearing braces are adults.

How are misaligned teeth fixed?

Orthodontists employ various techniques to realign teeth. Although braces are the most familiar orthodontic appliances, retainers, clear aligners, elastics, and palate expanders also are used to move the teeth and jaw. Braces and clear aligners gradually shift the teeth into desired positions over time using gentle force. Braces are not removable, while aligners have a series of removable trays that are worn for one or two weeks before switching them out for the next set. Retainers are custom oral appliances designed to keep teeth from drifting out of proper position after braces or aligners are no longer needed. It is essential to wear a retainer religiously to prevent teeth from shifting back into



the original position. Palate expanders are used to widen a child's upper jaw while they are still developing. These devices can create some extra space in the mouth without having to remove teeth or undergo other procedures.

When should a child see an orthodontist?

Unless a dentist refers a child earlier, the American Association of Orthodontists says children should have their first orthodontic visit no later than age seven. Most will not need treatment at this age, but it's often good for an early visit to understand if and

when orthodontic care may be necessary.

What else can we expect?

In many cases, orthodontic care cannot commence until all permanent teeth are in place. Orthodontists also may recommend having some tooth extractions done prior to braces placement to create more room to shift teeth. Therefore, a visit to an oral surgeon also may be part of a care plan.

Orthodontic care is required for a great number of people to help improve smiles, bites and general health.



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A 2024 study published in the Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology indicated that approximately one in nine children in the United States have ever been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The study also found that 6.5 million children had ADHD at the

time of publication. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that boys are more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than girls, and a significant percentage of youngsters (30 percent) with the condition do not receive medication treatment or behavioral treatment for the condition.

Warning signs for heart disease

Hear disease is the leading cause of death for women, men and people of most ethnic and racial groups, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One person dies from heart disease every 33 seconds. Understanding the risk factors for heart disease is the first step toward prevention and management. There are many things people can do to modify their risk for heart disease, but also some that cannot be changed. Ultimately, education is essential either way, and learning the risk factors for heart disease is vital to such education.

• **Age:** The risk for heart disease increases with age. For men the risk rises after age 45, and for women, it increases after menopause, or around age 55. Aging naturally leads to changes in the heart and blood vessels that increase the likelihood of developing cardiovascular problems, says the National Institute on Aging.

• **Sex:** Initially men are at a higher risk of developing heart disease. However, over time a woman's risk after menopause tends to equal that of a man's. As estrogen levels decline after menopause, fat can build up in the arteries, causing them to narrow, says the British Heart Foundation. After menopause, body weight may increase, which also is a risk factor for heart disease.

• **Family history:** Those with a close relative who developed heart disease at an early age may be at elevated risk.

• **Race:** UChicago Medicine says Black and Hispanic

people have an elevated risk of dying from heart disease compared to white individuals.

People may be able to change the following controllable risk factors for heart disease.

• **Hypertension:** Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, forces the heart to work harder and can stiffen the arteries. This can damage blood vessels over time. Medications and additional lifestyle changes can help seniors combat hypertension.

• **Smoking:** Smoking tobacco can damage blood vessels and reduce oxygen in the blood. Smoking also increases the risk of blood clots. Johns Hopkins Medicine says cigarette smokers are two to four times more likely to get heart disease than nonsmokers.

• **Cholesterol:** High levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), known as "bad" cholesterol, contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries. This can narrow arteries and restrict blood flow.

• **Sedentary lifestyle:** A lack of physical activity is a risk factor for obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, each of which increases a person's chances of being diagnosed with heart disease.

• **Dental health:** Poor dental health can allow bacteria to enter the bloodstream, which can potentially lead to inflammation that affects heart health.

By understanding risk factors and actively making changes to behaviors that can be modified, people can take strides toward protecting heart health and avoiding cardiovascular disease



The significance of exercise is well documented, and that even goes for seniors. But in the case of exercise, can there be too much of a good thing? Should seniors be exercising every day? Seniors can exercise most days, but daily, intense workouts are not necessary. Cedars-Sinai says adults 65 and older should aim for between 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate exercise each week, which aligns with recommendations from the Department of Health and Human Services. Seniors crunched for time can

engage in between 1.25 and 2.5 hours of intense aerobic exercise each week. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. That can translate into 30 minutes of daily exercise for five days, or it can be broken up into other intervals as necessary. Strength and balance training also should be a consideration. Seniors should keep in mind that overdoing intensity or length of workouts may contribute to injury, which can derail efforts to get fit

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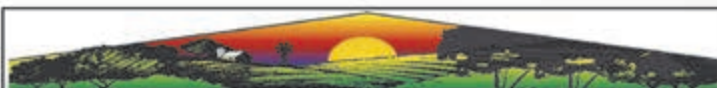
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Conditions that may benefit Chiropractic care

Aches, pains and creaks are not uncommon among the aging population. A lifetime of living can take a toll on the human body, so it's normal to experience some periodic side effects from all that wear and tear. But some issues may stem from more than normal wear and tear, and in such instances it can be useful to visit a chiropractor.

The Cleveland Clinic notes chiropractors treat an assortment of conditions that affect the nervous system and the musculoskeletal system. Many people prefer chiropractic care as an alternative to treatments that utilize prescription medication, and it's worth noting the many conditions that may be treated and alleviated by chiropractic care.

• **Arthritis:** Arthritis is a common condition, particularly among adults age 50 and older. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that one in five adults in the

United States had arthritis in 2024, while the Global RA Network estimates more than 350 million people have the condition across the globe. The Cleveland Clinic notes



normal, lifelong wear and tear is often the cause of arthritis, and chiropractors can employ various techniques to alleviate the pain associated with this common condition.

• **Headaches:** It might surprise people unfamiliar with chiropractic care to learn that it's not uncommon for people with headaches to seek the help of a chiropractor. The Canadian Chiropractic Association notes that chiropractic care has been found to be an effective means to treating

cervicogenic and tension headaches. Chiropractors may employ various treatments, including soft tissue therapy and acupuncture, to alleviate headache pain.

• **Lower back pain:**

Chiropractic care has long been looked to as a means to alleviating lower back pain. The experts at Duke Health note that chiropractors may employ spinal manipulation to treat back pain before offering additional advice, including self-care recommendations, to help patients avoid recurrence. Manual manipulation to improve movement in the spine may be part of chiropractic treatment of lower back pain.

• **Neck pain:** Chiropractors also can help treat neck pain. Many people experience limited mobility in their neck and/or soreness or joint pain in this area. A subluxation is a slight misalignment of the vertebrae that can contribute to pain, stiffness and reduced function in the neck. Chiropractic care works to restore vertebra to the correct position with the hopes that such a restoration will alleviate pain and improve mobility and function. Chiropractic care can be an invaluable solution when individuals suffer from aches, pains and creaks that can affect the human body over time.

Frequently Asked Questions About Afib

The World Health Organization reports that cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death across the globe. Various diseases are characterized as CVDs, which are disorders of the heart and blood vessels.

Heart attack and stroke are two well-known CVDs, but there are myriad additional threats to cardiovascular health, including atrial fibrillation, which is often referred to as "Afib." Television viewers accustomed to seeing advertisements for Afib medications might recognize the name of the condition but still come away with questions about what it is, its risk factors and other details.

What is Afib?

The American Heart Association notes atrial fibrillation is an irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia. When a person has Afib, the heart does not contract and relax to a regular beat. Instead, the upper chambers of the heart, also known as the atria, beat irregularly. When that occurs, an insufficient amount of blood is being pumped out of the atria, which causes the blood to pool in those chambers. The AHA notes pooled blood can clot, which in turn can cause blood to be pumped out of the heart to the brain. When that happens, it blocks the blood supply to the brain, and that can ultimately cause a stroke.

What does Afib feel like?

The AHA notes that patients who have Afib have described their experiences as feeling like their heart is banging against the wall of their chest and feeling as though their heart is beating so fast they are gasping for air. However, it's important to note that some reported no symptoms prior to an Afib diagnosis.

What are the risk factors for Afib?

The AHA reports that anyone can develop Afib, but there are various risk factors that can increase the chances someone receives an Afib diagnosis.

- **Age:** Risk for Afib increases with age. Though instances are rare, children can be diagnosed with Afib.
- **High blood pressure:** Anyone with long-term, untreated high blood pressure is at elevated risk for Afib.
- **Heart disease:** Heart disease increases a person's risk for Afib. Various heart conditions that fall under the heart

disease umbrella, including hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and coronary artery disease, increase risk for Afib.

- **Lifestyle choices:** An assortment of lifestyle choices, including some that might surprise people, can increase Afib risk. Smoking and drinking alcohol may increase Afib risk, but so can competing in sports at an elite level. But that shouldn't deter people from physical activity, as a sedentary lifestyle is another risk factor for Afib.

How is Afib treated?

The AHA notes treatment for Afib is typically characterized by shared decision-making, which involves patients and their physicians making treatment decisions together. Treatment ultimately may incorporate medication, lifestyle changes and/or medical procedures. Understanding Afib can be an important first step toward improving cardiovascular health.

How to make Mental health matter

Mental health is now discussed more openly than it once was. Mental illness or issues that affected mental health used to be stigmatized, and many people suffered in silence and might not have gotten the help they needed.

The National Institute of Mental Health reports more than one in five adults in the United States lives with a mental illness. Mental illnesses include many different conditions that may vary in degree of severity, from very mild to severe. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health advises that, in any given year, one in five Canadians experiences a mental illness as well. Such statistics highlight just how common mental illnesses are.

The NIMH notes self-care plays a significant role in maintaining mental health and supporting recovery. People can safeguard their mental health in many ways, and doing so will improve their overall health as well.

• **Spend time in nature.** Nature can have a calming effect on people. Going for a walk can help tame stress and break patterns of negative thinking. In Japan, the concept of forest bathing is said to improve mental health. Forest bathing involves spending time in a forest or another green area experiencing the different sounds, sights and smells that nature offers.

• **Set boundaries.** B2B Reviews says 12 percent of U.S. workers were fully remote in August 2023. Estimates suggest that number may have increased to around 14 percent by 2025. Working from home can make it more challenging to set firm divisions on time spent working and for home life. Establishing boundaries means not being available 24/7 for calls or emails and not feeling guilty about taking time away from work.

• **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of exercise each day can get feel-good endorphins flowing through the body to boost mood and bodily health.

• **Get more sleep.** Adults generally need between seven and nine hours of sleep for optimal health and reaching deep sleep phases, says the Mental Health Foundation. Creating consistent sleep routines that include going to bed and waking at the same time each day; avoiding screens before bed; and avoiding caffeine or vigorous exercise late in the day can help improve sleep.

• **Try relaxing activities.** Relaxing activities can include reading, listening to music, meditation, or low-stress crafts and hobbies. Make time each week for these calming pursuits.

• **Socialize with others.** Socializing provides opportunities to see others and talk about anything you want to get off your chest.

People feeling stress or anxiety might think they are alone. But having conversations with others can illustrate that these are common problems and there are solutions. Sometimes just talking about an issue can help you overcome it.

• **Use your vacation time.** Too many people are not using enough of their deserved and accrued time off. A survey from the financial services company Sorbet found that

62 percent of Americans don't use all of their paid time off. A Pew Research Center survey found that nearly half of U.S. employees with paid time off take less time than their employers offer. Failure to take time off is a recipe for burnout. Mental health should be a priority. Safeguarding mental health can involve various self-care techniques that anyone can employ.

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Risk factors for Prostate cancer

The American Cancer Society reports that prostate cancer is the second most diagnosed cancer in men across the globe. Each year, an estimated 1.5 million men are diagnosed with the disease, which affects the gland surrounding the neck of

is another genetic factor that's considered a risk for prostate cancer, as the PCF indicates men with a first-degree relative like a father or brother who have had the disease may be twice as likely to be diagnosed compared to men with no such connection.



the bladder in men. Though there's no guaranteed way to prevent prostate cancer, recognition of the various risk factors for the disease may compel men to improve their overall health.

• **Age:** The Prostate Cancer Foundation notes that roughly three in five prostate cancers are diagnosed in men over the age of 65. That makes age among the biggest risk factors for the disease. However, men younger than 65 should know that the rate of prostate cancer diagnoses increases sharply among men in their 50s. According to the PCF, prostate cancer affects roughly one in 457 men under age 50 but increases to one in 55 among men between the ages of 50 and 59.

• **Genetics/family history:** The PCF reports that medical researchers have identified some individual genes that increase a man's risk for prostate cancer. Men with those genes may need to take preventive measures, such as genetic counseling or alternative screenings, that others without them may not need. Family history

• **Race:** Though the reasons why remain a mystery, race is a risk factor for prostate cancer. The PCF reports that one in six Black men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetimes while one in eight white men will receive such a diagnosis. Black men also present at a younger age and are more likely to have a more advanced form of the disease at their time of diagnosis than white men.

• **Lifestyle habits:** Lifestyle habits, including diet and whether or not a man smokes, also can increase prostate cancer risk. The PCF notes men whose diets have contributed to them being overweight or obese are at greater risk of developing an aggressive form of prostate cancer than men who are not overweight or obese. Smoking also increases a man's risk of dying from prostate cancer. Prostate cancer poses a notable threat to men across the globe. More information about the disease can be found at pcf.org.



CLEAN TEETH COULD TRANSLATE TO CLEAN ARTERIES

The mouth and the heart are tied in a unique way. Good oral health that aims to prevent gum disease has the potential to positively impact heart health. The Cleveland Clinic points to research that brushing one's teeth may promote a healthier heart as well as healthier teeth. Although taking care of oral health will not eliminate the risk for heart issues down the line, some studies have found that people with gum disease may be twice as likely to have a heart attack or a stroke. But why? Gum disease is linked to

increased inflammation in the entire body, according to the experts. When combined with factors like high cholesterol and diabetes, gum-related inflammation can contribute to the development of blockages in the arteries. Gum disease also serves as a portal to where bacteria can enter the bloodstream. Research has found the same bacteria from common oral infections in plaques and blockages in the heart arteries. Bacteria from the mouth also may enter and attack artificial heart valves. Brushing and flossing teeth at least twice a day and visiting the dentist for regular cleanings and check-ups can safeguard teeth and the heart.

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Sleep and academic performance go hand in hand

Students and sleep are not always compatible. College students have long expressed a tendency to be night owls, but even school-aged youngsters may be reluctant to go to bed on time during the school year. Parents of school-aged children know that bedtime can be challenging, particularly when moms and dads want to ensure their youngsters get the recommended number of hours of sleep each night. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine advises school-aged children between the ages of six and 12 get nine to 12 hours of sleep per night, while teens are urged to sleep eight to 10 hours per night. Studies have found that when students don't get enough sleep on school nights, their academic performance is

likely to suffer. A 2023 study of first-year college students led by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that negative outcomes began to accumulate when students received less than six hours of sleep per night. Authors of the study noted that previous studies in animals showed that memories formed during the day were consolidated while animals slept but forgotten when those animals' normal sleep patterns were interrupted. The researchers behind the study identified a notable decline in students' grade point averages when they received less than six hours of sleep, suggesting humans' ability to learn and remember what they've learned in a given day is



compromised if they don't get enough sleep that night. School-aged youngsters typically get more than six hours of sleep per night, but if they're falling short of AASM recommendations, those students' academic performance could be adversely affected. With that in mind, parents can try various strategies to get children to bed on time.

• **Stay consistent with bedtime.** A firm bedtime can reduce the likelihood that sleep disruptions will affect how children perform in the classroom. If children are staying up three hours past their weeknight bedtime on Friday and Saturday, then they're less likely to want to go to bed on time on school nights. A little flexibility on the weekends might not upset the apple cart, but try to maintain a consistent bedtime throughout the week.

• **Help kids calm down before bed.** A winding down period leading up to bedtime can help kids fall asleep more quickly and might even make them less resistant to bedtime. Avoid particularly energetic activities directly before bedtime. Calmly reading a book and picking clothes out

for the next day of school are calm activities that can get kids' bodies ready for sleep.

• **Avoid confrontation.** Parents are urged to let it go if kids aren't falling right asleep but are still being cooperative at bedtime. Kids might want to keep reading to themselves after Mom and Dad say goodnight, and that's alright so long as children aren't continually getting out of bed or getting riled up. Eventually kids will tire out when engaging in a calm, pre-sleep activity, so parents should not grow upset and confront kids who are behaving but not falling asleep right away.

• **Create a positive sleep environment.** Young children will resist sleep if it sounds like their parents and siblings are having a grand old time without them. Parents typically go to great lengths to ensure kids' bedrooms are conducive to sleep, but it's also important to maintain a peaceful setting throughout the rest of the house once children go to bed. Sleep and school are inextricably linked, and parents can do much to ensure kids get the rest they need to do their best in the classroom.

Did You KNOW?



According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, skin damage builds up over time, beginning with a person's very first sunburn. The more a person's skin burns, the greater his or her risk for skin cancer becomes. The SCF notes that the same ultraviolet (UV) rays that damage skin alter a tumor-suppressing gene. That alteration gives injured cells

a smaller window to repair before a tumor becomes cancerous. Five or more sunburns in a lifetime doubles a person's risk for melanoma, which can be deadly. That cumulative effect underscores the need to emphasize skin protection methods, such as wearing sunscreen and avoiding exposure to the sun between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

What is Alpha-gal syndrome?

Food allergies have become more common across the globe over the last several decades. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates 3.9 percent of children and 1.1 percent of adults had food allergies in 1997-98. Those percentages more than doubled to 8 percent of children and more than 2 percent of adults by 2019-2020.



How long before an Alpha-gal allergic reaction begins?

The Mayo Clinic notes that most reactions to food allergens begin within

in all mammals except for humans and some primates. So products made from mammals, including beef, pork and lamb, are among the foods someone with Alpha-gal syndrome may be allergic to. Dairy, gelatin and additional products derived from mammals also may trigger an allergic response in people with Alpha-gal syndrome.

Awareness of food allergies has grown in recent decades, but some may just now be popping on individuals' radars. Alpha-gal syndrome is one such allergy that's only recently gaining wider attention among the general public.

What is Alpha-gal syndrome?

Food allergies and insect bites might seem like strange bedfellows, but that unique connection is precisely how Alpha-gal syndrome begins. According to the Mayo Clinic, Alpha-gal syndrome is a food allergy that usually traces its origins to the bite of a Lone Star tick. That bite transfers a sugar molecule known as alpha-gal into the body, triggering an immune system response.

What are people with Alpha-gal syndrome allergic to?

People know ticks are not food for human beings, so it can seem curious that a tick bite contributes to a food allergy. But the link lies within the sugar molecule from which the syndrome gets its name. According to Alphagalinformation.org, a website devoted to raising awareness about the condition, the sugar molecule alpha-gal is found

minutes of consuming or being exposed to the food that triggers the reaction. For example, someone with a peanut allergy may begin to feel side effects almost immediately. Alpha-gal allergic reactions take longer to develop. The Mayo Clinic indicates such reactions usually appear three to six hours after exposure.

What happens during an Alpha-gal allergic reaction?

The symptoms that appear during an Alpha-gal allergic reaction are similar to those associated with other food allergies. Such symptoms include:

- The development of hives, itching or itchy, scaly skin
 - Swelling that affects the lips, face, tongue, and throat.
- The Mayo Clinic notes swelling related to Alpha-gal syndrome also may affect other body parts.
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
 - Stomach pain, upset stomach, diarrhea, or vomiting
- Alpha-gal syndrome may not be as widely recognized as other food allergies, but it poses a significant threat nonetheless. More information about the condition can be found at Alphagalinformation.org.

Common warning signs for cataracts



blurriness may be associated with an assortment of vision problems, including cataracts. Blurry vision makes it difficult to see clearly or sharply, and cataracts are characterized by cloudiness that affects the natural lens of the eye. The blurriness associated with cataracts is the result of a breakdown of proteins in the lens of the affected eye, according to the AAO.

• **Seeing double:** Double vision also is symptomatic of various vision issues, including cataracts. The AAO notes that when a person is seeing double, he or she may be seeing two, often overlapping, images of a single object.

• **Sensitivity to light:** The AAO notes a need to shield eyes from light to prevent eye pain could indicate a sensitivity to light that is characteristic of cataracts. This sensitivity may be especially noticeable when confronted by oncoming headlights at night.

• **Difficulty seeing at night:** The AAO reports that this symptom is often characterized by difficulty seeing in dark conditions that can make it harder to adjust to seeing when going from a well-lit space into darkness. That adjustment also may take longer in people experiencing cataracts. Some people may not be able to see at all in dimly lit conditions.

• **Seeing faded colors:** Bright colors that appear faded or yellow is another symptom of cataracts.

Cataracts compromise vision, but it's important that people recognize there are effective treatments for this condition. More information is available at aao.org.

No one wants to imagine a day when their vision might abandon them, but diminished eyesight is a common occurrence that affects people of all ages and from all walks of life. A 2022 report from the World Health Organization indicated that at least 826 million people have distance- or near-vision impairment that could be addressed with an appropriate pair of eyeglasses. Those people are among the estimated 2.2 billion people who currently have issues that affect their ability to see.

Cataracts are a common and treatable vision problem. Access to cataract treatment is limited in various countries. In fact, a 2021 study published in the journal *Lancet Global Health* found that 94 million people ages 50 and over have vision impairment or blindness that could be corrected through access to cataract surgery. Surgery might not even be considered if people are not first aware of the symptoms of cataracts, which can manifest in various ways.

• **Blurry vision:** The American Academy of Ophthalmology notes that

Separating fact from fiction Regarding menopause

Menopause is a natural biological function that takes place in a woman's life. Menopause marks the end of a woman's reproductive years, meaning she will no longer be able to conceive children. Menopause often is misunderstood, largely due to persisting myths. Separating the facts from fiction can help provide clarity regarding this stage in a woman's life.

Fiction: Menopause happens suddenly on a specific date.

Fact: Menopause is a gradual process that begins with a stage known as perimenopause. This is the transitional phase leading up to menopause, which can last four to nine years. The North American Menopause Society says most women begin perimenopause in their mid- to late-40s and reach menopause around age 51 on average.

Fiction: You'll know in advance when you've reached menopause.

Fact: Menopause will not be evident until after 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period.

Fiction: Hot flashes are the only symptom of menopause to be concerned about.

Fact: Menopause (and perimenopause) can bring on a variety of symptoms. John's Hopkins Medicine says approximately 75 to 80 percent of women will experience hot flashes during menopause. However, additional symptoms may include night sweats, sleep disturbances, mood swings, joint pain, and memory problems. The Mayo Clinic emphasizes that symptoms and their severity vary widely among women.

Fiction: Menopause is depressing and a sign of "getting old."

Fact: Menopause is a natural life stage and not a sign of decline. Many women report feeling more confident after menopause has occurred and less stressed not having to keep track of menstrual periods. A 2023 survey from the American Association of Retired Persons found that 71 percent of women between the ages of 45 and 59 felt empowered to take charge of their health during menopause.

Fiction: Women just have to grin and bear the menopause transition.

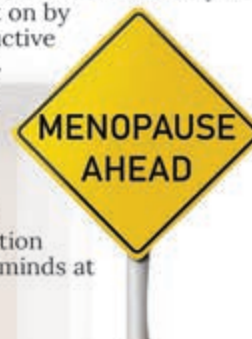
Fact: Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is safe and effective for many women, particularly those under age 60 or within 10 years of the onset of menopause. A Women's Health Initiative study in the early 2000s initially correlated HRT to increased risk of breast cancer, heart disease and stroke. Today, updated reviews from the National Institutes of Health clarify that these risks depend on individual

factors. HRT remains the most effective treatment for hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

Fiction: Menopause will put an end to intimacy.

Fact: Some women report changes in libido and vaginal comfort after menopause takes place, but many women remain sexually active and happy. A study in *Menopause*, the official journal of the NAMS, found 60 percent of women between the ages of 50 and 79 reported being sexually active. Various products and treatments can support sexual health as women age.

Menopause is something most women will experience as they age, whether naturally or brought on by reproductive surgery. Getting past the myths to the real information can set minds at ease.



Avid readers may feel there's nothing better than diving into a good book, but that book might be even more beneficial than they realize, particularly for older book lovers. A 2016 study published in the journal *Social Science & Medicine* noted that reading books can promote empathy, social perception and emotional intelligence, notable benefits that researchers found

contributed to a survival advantage. Researchers behind the study noted book readers experienced a 20 percent reduction in risk of mortality over a 12-year followup period than non-book readers. Equally notable among the researchers' findings was older individuals who read books enjoyed this survival advantage regardless of their gender, overall health, socioeconomic status, or education levels.

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Health conditions that can Affect newborns



Parents of newborns know that no two days of caring for such young children are the same. Each day presents a new challenge for parents of newborns, and many of those challenges can be linked to the youngsters' health.

Newborns cannot explain what's bothering them, so parents must work with their children's health care team to identify any medical issues that arise. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes the following are some common conditions in newborns that parents can learn to recognize.

- **Blue baby:** Mildly blue or purple hands and feet is not typically a cause for alarm. The AAP notes some newborns' hands and feet turn blue when the child is cold and then return to being pink once they become warm again. Crying also can cause the face, tongue and lips to

turn slightly blue. A blue tone to the skin can sometimes be a cause for alarm, as in certain instances this indicates the heart or lungs are not functioning optimally and there is insufficient oxygen in the blood.

- **Blood in the stool:** A small amount of blood in newborns' bowel movements is not unusual and may indicate a small crack in the anus that the AAP notes is generally harmless. However, it's best to report blood in the stool to a child's pediatrician to rule out other issues that can be more harmful.

- **Coughing:** Some newborns cough because they drink too quickly, and that coughing will likely subside quickly. Report coughing to a pediatrician if coughs are more persistent and the child gags during feedings, as such symptoms may indicate problems with the lungs or digestive tract.

- **Jaundice:** Jaundice is characterized by skin having a yellow tinge to it. Mild jaundice is typically harmless, but this condition merits a discussion with a child's pediatrician because it's caused by a buildup of bilirubin in the blood. If bilirubin levels in the blood continue to rise and this is not treated, children may develop a brain injury, according to the AAP. Jaundice also can affect the whites of the eyes and may progress from the face to the chest, the abdomen, and finally the arms and legs.

- **Respiratory issues:** The AAP notes it takes a few hours for newborns to form a normal breathing pattern. Blocked nasal passages may contribute

to unusual breathing patterns, and that often can be remedied with nasal drops or a bulb syringe that suctions mucus from the nose. But parents must recognize that some respiratory issues merit immediate consultation with a child's pediatrician. Such issues include fast breathing, retractions (sucking in muscles around the ribs with each breath), flaring of the nose, grunting while breathing, and persistent blue skin coloring. It's easy to grow worried when newborns exhibit symptoms that suggest they're experiencing a medical issue. Though many issues ultimately prove harmless, they still merit attention and possibly even consultation with a pediatrician.



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Notable threats to long-term hearing

Hearing is easily taken for granted. Many people never experience issues with their hearing until it begins to decline in their golden years. But no one is immune to hearing loss, and estimates indicate it could become a significant issue over the next quarter century. A 2025 report from the World Health Organization noted that nearly 2.5 billion people are projected to have some type of hearing loss by 2050, with more than 700 million requiring hearing rehabilitation. Perhaps the most troubling part of the WHO forecast is that more than one billion young adults are at risk of permanent, avoidable hearing loss. Though such projections are disconcerting, people are not helpless against hearing loss. In fact, recognition of various threats to long-term hearing can be a great first step toward protecting against hearing loss.

Recreational activities

When engaging in recreational activities, it's easy to forget cautionary measures, including the need to protect one's hearing. But that can lead to irreparable hearing loss. Various recreational activities pose a threat to

long-term hearing if the right safety measures are not taken before engaging in them. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders notes the following activities can threaten hearing if the proper safety precautions are not taken:

- Target shooting
- Hunting
- Snowmobile riding
- Listening to music on high volume through earbuds and headphones
- Playing in a band
- Attending loud concerts

Around the house

It's also easy to encounter harmful noises around the home, and even brief or sporadic exposure to such noises can pose a threat to long-term hearing. The NIDCD reports that some common noises around a home that pose a threat to hearing include:

- Lawnmowers
- Leaf blowers
- Power tools

Avoiding hearing loss

One potential motivator in relation to hearing loss prevention is recognition of the average decibel levels of everyday sounds compared to the decibel levels of less



common noises. For example, listening to music through headphones at maximum volume can be as high as 110 A-weighted decibels (dBA), which is just 30 decibels lower than some fireworks shows and roughly the same as police sirens. The NIDCD also notes that an individual's distance from the sound and the length of time they're exposed

to the sound are important variables to consider when trying to avoid hearing loss. The further away from a loud noise and the less a person is exposed to loud noises can protect hearing. Individuals encounter threats to their long-term hearing every day. More information about protecting against hearing loss can be found at nidcd.nih.gov.

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