

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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May is Mental Health Month

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.

So much of what we do physically impacts us mentally. Paying attention to both your physical health and your mental health can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

- A **healthy lifestyle** can help to prevent the onset or worsening of mental health conditions, as well as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other chronic health problems. It can also help people recover from these conditions. Taking good care of your body is part of a Before Stage Four approach to mental health.
- Eating **healthy foods**, **managing stress**, **exercising**, and **getting enough sleep** can go a long way in making you both physically and mentally healthy.
- Getting the **appropriate amount of exercise** benefits nearly all aspects of a person's health. Not only does exercise help control weight, it also improves mental health, and chances of living longer and healthier.
- Recent research is connecting **your gut health** with your mental health. So, when it comes to diet and nutrition, it's all about finding the right balance of nutrients to benefit both the mind and body.
- **Sleep** plays a role in all aspects of our life and overall health. Getting a good night's sleep is important to having enough physical and mental energy to take on daily responsibilities.
- **Stress** has a huge impact on our lives and can make even day-to-day life difficult. Research shows that stress is closely linked to high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity. It also shows that people who feel depressed or chronically stressed may have a greater risk of physical illnesses.

Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes.

By looking at your overall health every day – both physically and mentally – you can go a long way in ensuring that you focus on your Fitness #4Mind4Body.

Ten Tools for Mental Health

1. Connect with others
2. Stay positive
3. Get physically active
4. Help others
5. Get enough sleep
6. Create joy and satisfaction
7. Eat well
8. Take care of your spirit
9. Deal better with hard times
10. Get professional help if you need it



* To be healthy as a whole, mental wellness plays a role. *

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HEALTHY VISION MONTH

Getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to catch eye diseases early, because with many, there are no warning signs.

You might think your vision is in good shape or that your eyes are healthy, but visiting your eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to be completely certain. When it comes to common vision problems, many people don't realize their vision could be improved with glasses or contact lenses. In addition, many common eye diseases such as glaucoma and diabetic eye disease often have no early symptoms. A comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to detect these diseases in their early stages. Talk to your eye care professional about how often you should have one.

During a comprehensive dilated eye exam, drops are placed in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupil. Your eye care professional uses a special magnifying lens to examine your retina and look for signs of damage and other eye problems. After the examination, your close-up vision may remain blurred for several hours.

Living healthy can lower your risk of eye disease.

Living an overall healthy life is good for your eyes. You can start taking steps toward living a healthy life by:

Maintaining a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions, which can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma.

Eating healthy foods. You've heard carrots are good for your eyes, but eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, particularly dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens, is important for keeping your eyes healthy too. Research has also shown there are eye health benefits from eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, and halibut.

Not smoking. Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has linked smoking to an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.

Managing chronic conditions. Many conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and multiple sclerosis, can greatly impact vision, resulting in inflammation of the optic nerve, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and even blindness. Managing these conditions with the help of your health care provider can often prevent these eye problems from occurring.

Most people know the sun's rays are bad for our skin. But did you know they're just as bad for our eyes?

Sunglasses are a great fashion accessory, but their most important job is to protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. Some of the sun's effects on the eyes include:

- Cataracts, a clouding of the eye's lens that can blur vision. An estimated 20% of cases are caused by extended UV exposure.
- Macular degeneration, resulting from damage to the retina that destroys central vision. Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in the United States.
- Pterygium, a tissue growth over the white part of the surface of the eye that can alter the curve of the eyeball, causing astigmatism.

When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100% of both UVA and UVB radiation, so you can keep your vision sharp and eyes healthy. A wide-brimmed hat offers great protection, too!



Healthy Eyes are Happy Eyes!

