



YOUR

HEALTH

Listen Up for Healthy Ears

Children laughing, birds chirping and music ringing from the radio. These are the sweet sounds of healthy ears. It is crucial to ensure the ongoing health of the ears.

From otitis media (middle ear infection that causes hearing loss in children) to tinnitus (ringing in the ears caused by damage to the hearing nerve), many medical conditions can lead to irreversible hearing impairment or deafness.

If you suspect that you, a family member or friend have a problem with hearing, seek an immediate diagnosis from a physician. Prompt attention from a medical professional could lead to positive results from treatment or medication, rather than surgery.

HEARING LOSS

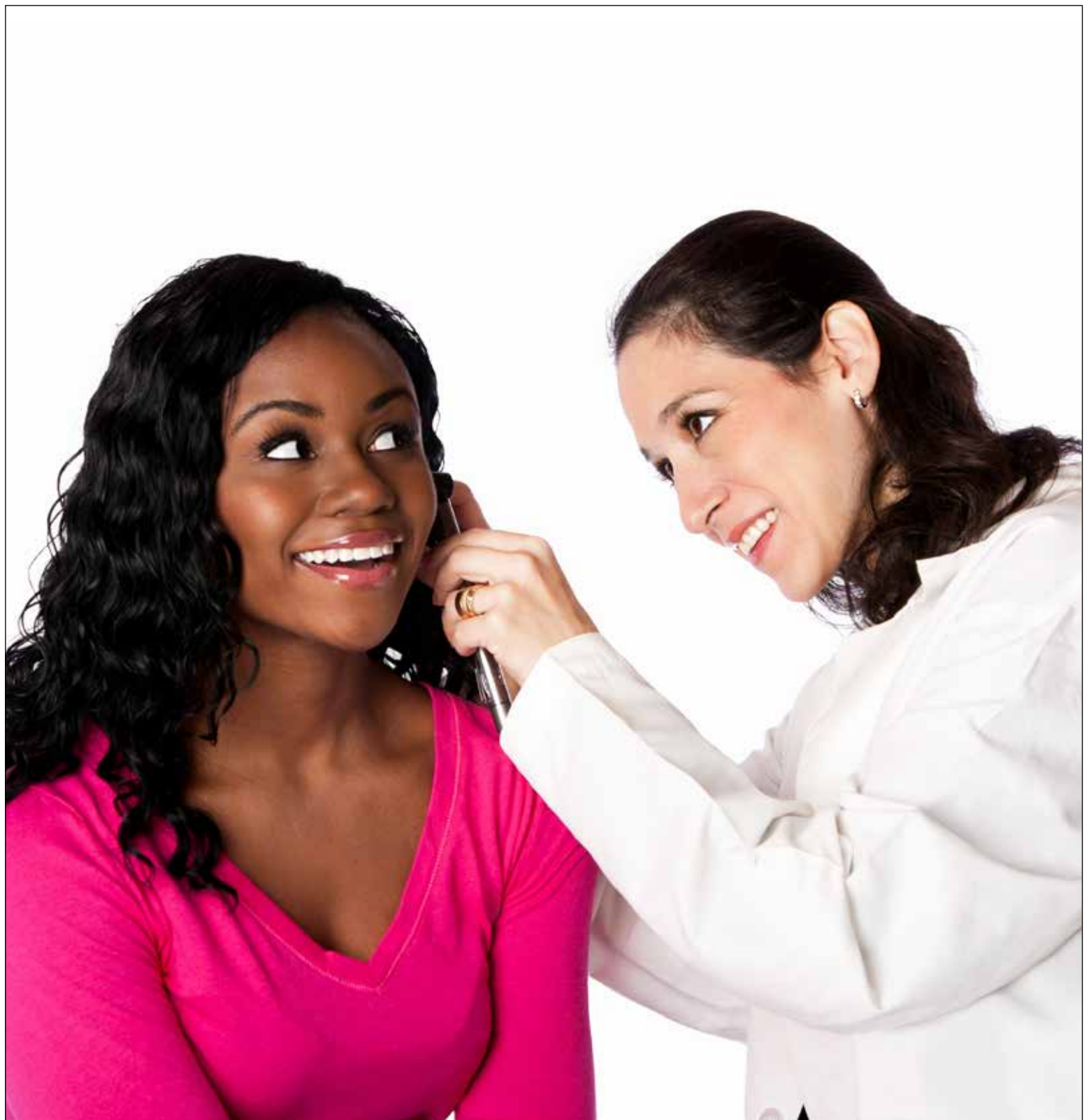
The third most common physical condition after arthritis and heart disease, hearing loss is a major public health issue. About 48 million American adults report some degree of hearing loss, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America.

It also is important to know the warning signs of hearing loss, which can include difficulty hearing conversations, frequently asking others to repeat their statements or misunderstanding what other people say.

EAR CLEANING TIPS

Cleaning your ears is a simple yet highly critical aspect of overall health. The Cleveland Clinic Foundation offers the following tips:

- Clean your ears with extra care by wiping the outer ear with a washcloth or tissue. Do not use bobby pins or sharp, pointed objects to clean your ears. These objects may injure the ear canal or eardrum.
- Earwax is the ear's mechanism for self-cleaning, so let it do its work. If you have a buildup of wax that is blocking your hearing, see your doctor to have it removed.
- If you experience itching or pain in your ears, consult with your primary care physician to determine the issue and appropriate treatment. He or she will determine if you need to see a specialist.
- If you have pierced ears, clean your earrings and earlobes regularly with rubbing alcohol.



Surviving a Wildfire

Much like most natural disasters, wildfires can leave you feeling absolutely vulnerable. Nothing is seemingly in your control, especially if you are ordered to evacuate your home.

From smoke inhalation to the mental stress of leaving your belongings behind, wildfires can produce a range of negative impacts on your health.

The Arizona Department of Health Services recommends families build and implement their own wildfire plans for safety and evacuation.

HEALTH RISKS

Smoke from wildfires can be extremely damaging to your eyes and respiratory system. Made from a mixture of gases and fine particles burning from tress and other plant materials, wildfire smoke also can rapidly worsen chronic heart and lung diseases.

These dangerous implications make it crucial to heed warnings from officials during evacuation recommendations. Symptoms of short-term smoke exposure include scratchy throat, cough, irritated sinuses and headaches, according to the Arizona Department of Health Services. Older adults, children and people with asthma, emphysema or congestive heart disease make up the highest-risk group for serious reactions.

AFTER THE FIRE

Even if your home is undamaged, you may notice a red-shaded residual fire retardant on some surfaces. This mixture of fertilizer and red pigment is critical to crews trying to quell raging wildfires.

People exposed to the retardant generally experience little to no problems, but mild skin and eye irritation can occur. The residual should be easily washed away by simply hosing it off any affected surfaces. If not, contact a local professional cleaning company.

COUNSELING HELP

One of the most overlooked effects of a damaging wildfire can be the mental anguish that accompanies the loss of personal property, money or important documents. Seek out professionals who provide counseling, housing or medical services. Get in touch with your local government quickly to see what can be done to improve your situation.



Juvenile Arthritis

A painful disorder with no cure, juvenile arthritis is made even more painful by the fact that it puts children in great discomfort.

The goal of treatment is to relieve inflammation, control pain and improve your child's quality of life, according to the Arthritis Foundation. Most treatment plans involve a combination of medication, physical activity, eye care and healthy eating.

WHAT IS IT?

The most common type of the disorder is juvenile idiopathic arthritis. To receive a diagnosis, a child should be younger than 16 and have initial swelling in one or more joints for at least six weeks, according to the foundation. No known cause has been identified for most forms of juvenile arthritis; some research points toward a genetic predisposition.

ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS

The first and most critical step in treating your child's arthritis is obtaining an accurate, comprehensive diagnosis. Your child's pediatrician will likely recommend that you visit a pediatric rheumatologist, who will complete a careful exam and collect a full health history.

Along with the physical exam, your child's doctors will likely perform laboratory work, X-rays, blood work and other diagnostic tests. Depending on the age and maturity level of your child, this can be an emotionally challenging process.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Parents and children alike will experience many emotions when dealing with juvenile arthritis. Sadness, guilt or anger are a few of the feelings that can accompany a diagnosis. The foundation prompts parents to keep relationships and schedules as consistent as possible, even if they feel the urge to shut down and keep to themselves.

Also, keep everyone equally involved in and informed about your child's diagnosis. Siblings especially may feel less attention from you, so it is important to maximize their involvement in communicating with and treating your child with juvenile arthritis.



Jogging = Longer Life?

Pounding the pavement. Stretching out the heart muscle. Working in a quick run. However you refer to jogging, researchers are united on one simple principle – it works.

Regular jogging increases the life expectancy of men by 6.2 years and women by 5.6 years, according to a long-running study from the Copenhagen City Heart study. One to two-and-a-half hours of jogging per week at a slow or average pace delivers optimum benefits for longevity, the study said.

STUDY DETAILS

The first data for the Copenhagen City Heart study was collected between 1976 and 1978, the second from 1981 to 1983, the third from 1991 to 1994 and the fourth from 2001 to 2003. Ages of the study participants ranged from 20 to 93.

For the sub-study portion of the research, the mortality of 1,116 male joggers and 762 female joggers was compared to the non-joggers in the main study population. All participants were asked to answer questions about the amount of time they spent jogging each week and to rate their own perceptions of pace. This helped researchers reach their recommendation for the ideal frequency of jogging.

THE RESULTS

Results show that in the follow-up period of the study involving a maximum of 35 years, 10,158 deaths were registered among the non-joggers and 122 deaths among the joggers. Analysis showed that risk of death was reduced by 44 percent for male joggers and 44 percent for female joggers.

Furthermore the data showed jogging produced an age-adjusted survival benefit of 6.2 years in men and 5.6 years in women.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Investigators found that more than one to two-and-a-half hours a week of jogging – especially if performed at a higher-than-average pace, could actually work against joggers and produce some negative health effects. A slow or average pace helped keep the cardiovascular impact at optimal levels.



The Truth About Juicing

Juicing first came into popularity in the 1990s as a way to promote the immune system and cleanse the body of harmful toxins.

Juicing proponents claim that juices' nutrients correct imbalances created by unnatural foods. Other advocates recommend juicing as a way to add more plant-derived nutrients to the diet.

This treatment method is frequently used to sustain the body during long fasts or as part of the popular Gerson regimen. But decades after its entry into the dieting nomenclature, juicing's impact on human health is being brought to light by many researchers.

JUICE VS. WHOLE FRUIT

In a recent study by the Harvard School of Public Health, people who ate at least two servings each week of certain whole fruits — particularly blueberries, grapes, and apples — reduced their risk for type 2 diabetes by as much as 23 percent in comparison to those who ate less than one serving per month.

Conversely, those who consumed one or more servings of fruit juice each day increased their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by as much as 21 percent, according to the study. The researchers found that swapping three servings of juice per week for whole fruits would result in a seven percent reduction in diabetes risk.

THE SQUEEZE ON JUICE

Overall, juicing is considered safe when it is used as part of a healthy diet. A diet high in vegetables and fruits has been shown to reduce cancer risk and to improve overall health. But there is no convincing scientific evidence that extracted juices are healthier than whole foods, according to the American Cancer Society.

Some vitamins are destroyed by the heat used to draw out juices from fruits and vegetables. Also, juice extractors remove the critical fiber-containing pulp from the raw food, which results in less fiber intake.

Health professionals recommend eating the pulp from the juiced vegetables and fruits, which helps keep enough fiber in the diet.



Coffee's Jolt to Your Health

Ah, the morning cup of coffee. It shakes away our sleep and readies us for the day's challenges. Many health professionals say it also may have many health advantages.

Coffee may provide protection against Parkinson's disease, type 2 diabetes and liver disease. It also appears to improve cognitive function and decrease the risk of depression, according to the Mayo Clinic.

WHY THE TURNAROUND?

Coffee hasn't always been the apple of the medical community's eye. In fact, it has a long history of being blamed for many negative health issues ranging from stunting growth to causing cancer.

But a closer look at its impact on the body has found an association between coffee consumption and decreased overall mortality. Why the apparent change of tone? Earlier studies sometimes didn't incorporate the fact that known high-risk behaviors, such as smoking and physical inactivity, tended to be more common among heavy coffee drinkers at that time.

POSSIBLE RISKS

The research does, however, appear to bear out some risks. High consumption of unfiltered coffee (boiled or espresso) has been associated with mild elevations in cholesterol levels. What we add to our coffee also can negate the positive impacts of our favorite java. Some coffee



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drinks contain more than 500 calories, thanks to a few splashes of cream and sugar.

And some studies have found that two or more cups of coffee a day can increase the risk of heart disease in

people with a specific genetic mutation that slows the breakdown of caffeine.

SMART TIPS

The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention offers these tips for your trip to the coffee shop:

- If you take milk in your coffee, request that your drink be made with fat-free or low-fat milk.

- Order the smallest size available – especially if you add milk and sugar to your drink.

- Avoid sugar-heavy flavored syrups.

- Plain, black coffee is the healthiest option.

Guide to Open Enrollment

Are you happy with your current insurance plan? If not, your next chance to take advantage of the Affordable Care Act's open enrollment period is on the horizon.

The flagship feature of President Barack Obama's healthcare law is the marketplace that provides Americans a limited time period during the year to shop, compare and choose a health insurance plan through open enrollment.

This means if you lose track of time or decide not to get a plan, you will likely have to wait a whole year to get insurance – not to mention pay a fee known as the individual shared responsibility payment.

Insured?

THE NEXT OPEN ENROLLMENT

The open enrollment period for 2015 coverage is Nov. 15, 2014 through Feb. 14, 2015. If you haven't enrolled in coverage by then, you generally can't buy marketplace health coverage for 2015 until the next enrollment period, unless you qualify for special enrollment periods outside of open enrollment.

People experiencing special life events may be able to qualify any time during the year if they are:

- Moving to a new state
- Experiencing certain changes in income
- Getting married or divorced, or having a baby

Check healthcare.gov to find out if you qualify for a special enrollment period that allows you to buy a private health plan.

THE PENALTY

Choosing not to purchase health insurance can cost

you in the long run. In 2014, the individual shared responsibility payment was set at 1 percent of your annual income or \$95 per person for the year, whichever was higher.

The fee will only continue to increase every year and is scheduled to be 2.5 percent

Yes



No



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of your income or \$695 in 2016.

Penalty payments are made when you file your taxes, which are due in April every year.

There are exemptions to the payment. See healthcare.gov/exemptions for the full list. You may qualify if:

- You're uninsured for less than three months of the year
- The lowest-priced coverage available would cost more than 8 percent of your household income
- You don't have to file a tax return because your income is too low.