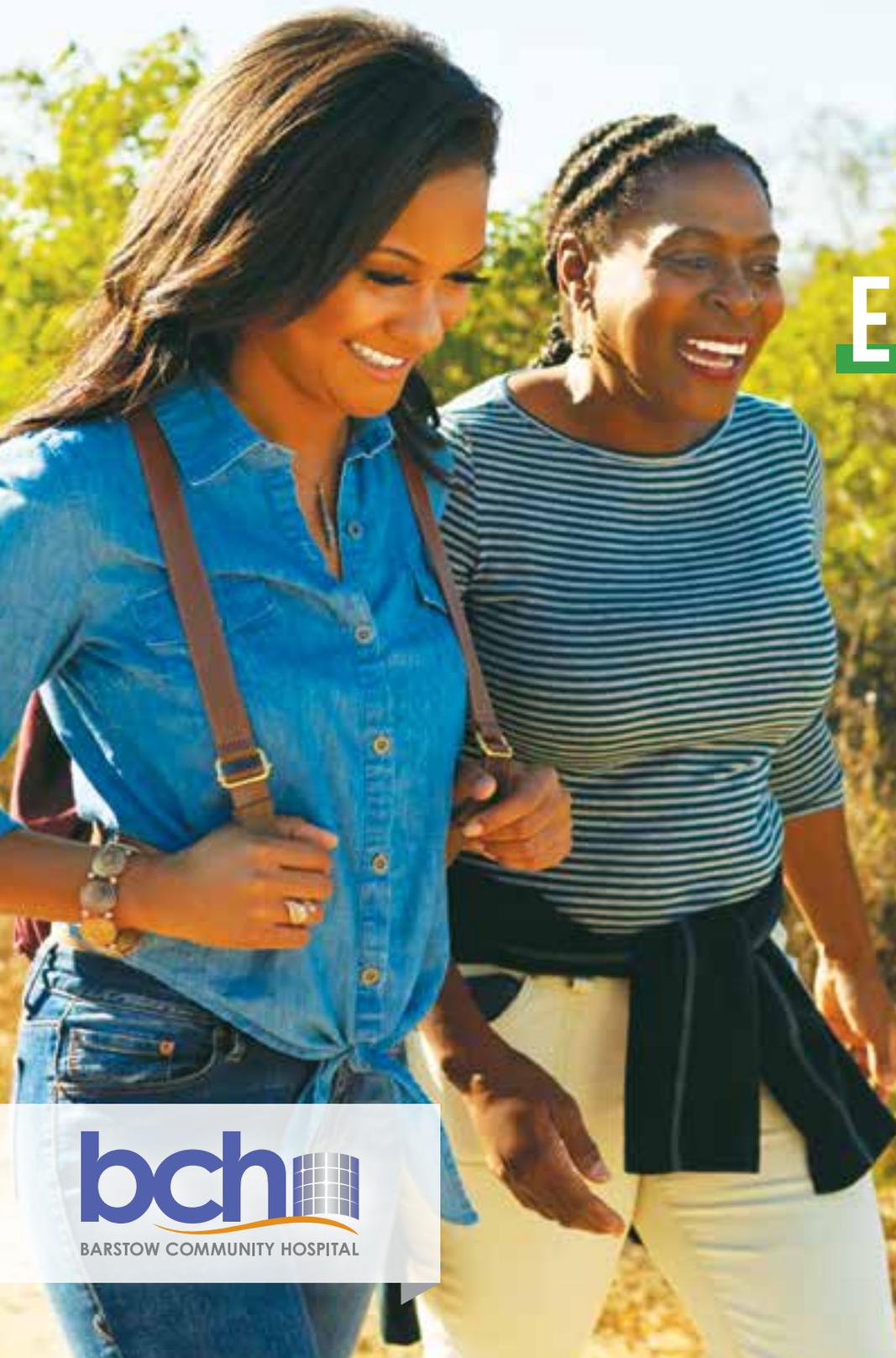


# Health CONNECTIONS

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE



## ECOTHERAPY:

Walk Away From  
**Your Worries**

HEALTH TIPS FOR  
**NAILS, SKIN AND SUN**

**SHAKING SODIUM  
OUT OF YOUR DIET**



# IF YOUR **Nails** COULD TALK

It's normal to clip the occasional hangnail or catch your fingertip in a door. However, you should keep an eye out for the following nail symptoms that could point to more serious medical conditions:

- **Darkened cuticles and colored streaks** that develop on nails are called Hutchinson's nail sign. They can indicate that you have melanoma, the most aggressive form of skin cancer.
- **Splinter hemorrhages** are red streaks in the nail bed and may signal an infected heart valve, especially if you haven't injured your nail recently.
- Heart conditions and lung diseases can cause **clubbing of the fingernails**. Clubbing symptoms include softening of the nail beds, bulging fingertips and increased nail curvature.
- **Brittle nails** and nails that split away from the skin can be signs of an underactive or overactive thyroid. They can also signal the development of psoriasis, a skin disease that causes redness and irritation.

If your nails exhibit any of these signs or if they don't look normal to you, don't hesitate to contact your medical provider.

*Source: National Library of Medicine*

# Know Your **ABCDEs**

Detecting skin cancer doesn't require a complicated screening or exam. One of the best ways to detect melanoma early is by checking your skin once a month for one or more of these features:

- **ASYMMETRY** — The mole or birthmark has mismatched parts.
  - **BORDER** — The edges of the spot are blurred, notched, jagged or irregular.
  - **COLOR** — The color changes throughout the mole and may contain shades of brown, black, and — less frequently — white, red, pink or blue.
  - **DIAMETER** — The mole or birthmark is wider than a quarter of an inch.
  - **EVOLVING** — The color, size or shape of the spot changes over time.
- Use both a full-length mirror and a hand-held mirror to check your entire body, including areas that are difficult to see. Ask your doctor about any concerning developments.

*Source: American Cancer Society*



Concerned about a mole or birthmark? See your primary care provider (PCP) for a potential referral to a dermatologist. If you don't have a PCP, call (760) 892-3163 to find one near you.

# Sun PROTECTION



Protect your eyes and skin from sun damage all year round by:

**applying sunscreen** with an sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or greater to all exposed skin areas

**wearing sunglasses** that block 99 percent or more of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays



**dressing in clothes that cover more of your skin**, especially if their labels display a UV protection factor (UPF) of 30 or higher

**choosing hats** with brims that are at least three inches wide



*Source: Skin Cancer Foundation*



# FUEL FOR TWO

Making pregnancy-safe changes to your diet before you are expecting helps ensure your baby is protected from potentially harmful chemicals and receives the best possible nutrition from day one.

Your baby achieves important developmental milestones, including formation of the neural tube that goes on to form the brain and spinal cord, during the first four to eight weeks of pregnancy — many times, before you even realize you're pregnant. The foods you eat or avoid during this time play vital roles in aiding proper growth and development, which is why providers recommend adjusting your diet as soon as you start thinking about becoming pregnant.

Use these do's and don'ts to guide your healthy eating habits before and after pregnancy:

- ✓ **Do take 400 to 800 micrograms of folic acid every day.** Supplementing your diet with folic acid before and during pregnancy helps prevent certain birth defects, including neural tube defects, according to the March of Dimes.
- ✗ **Don't drink alcohol.** Everything you eat or drink is passed onto your baby, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that no known level of alcohol is safe for baby during pregnancy.
- ✓ **Do limit your caffeine consumption.** Every day, aim for no more than 200mg — about one tall latte, one 12-ounce cup of coffee or two 12-ounce colas.
- ✗ **Don't treat pregnancy as a license to overeat.** You'll only need about 300 extra calories per day during the second and third trimesters to support your growing baby.
- ✓ **Do talk with your provider about other healthy eating tips, such as foods to avoid.** For example, pregnant women shouldn't eat raw foods, such as sushi.



Are you expecting? Barstow Community Hospital is designated by the World Health Organization as a Baby-Friendly® Hospital. Visit [BarstowHospital.com](http://BarstowHospital.com) and search "obstetrics" to watch a video highlighting our birthing center.

## Fast Fact

Adjusting your diet is just one step in your preconception journey. Maximizing your health by losing weight, quitting smoking and working with your doctor to control existing medical conditions also helps ensure good health for you and your precious cargo.

## FUEL FOR ONE

Health data supports many advantages of breastfeeding, such as breast milk contains antibodies that help your baby fight off viruses and bacteria.

After your baby is born at Barstow Community Hospital, an international board-certified lactation consultant is available Monday through Friday to help promote successful breastfeeding. You can also schedule a time for outpatient support and education after you go home.

### PRENATAL BREASTFEEDING CLASSES:

First Wednesday of the month, 5–6:30 p.m.

OB Waiting Room

### BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT GROUP FOR NEW MOMS:

Every Thursday, 1–5 p.m.

OB Waiting Room

For more information, please call (760) 301-5693.

# OUTDOOR RX

Whether you prefer exercising outdoors, meditating in a natural setting or simply working in your garden, ecotherapy — healing time spent in the natural world — offers something for everyone.

In the 1980s, Harvard University biologist Edward O. Wilson, PhD, presented a concept called “biophilia” in which he argued that humans have an innate love of and connection to nature. Today, scientific research shows that connection has numerous positive effects on our health.

A slightly unconventional practice called ecotherapy is becoming more commonly used as part of mental health treatment in the United States. Used to treat many conditions, including depression and anxiety, ecotherapy works to address a wide variety of stressors through outdoor activities including adventure therapy, meditating in nature, working in gardens and on farms, playing with animals and getting involved in conservation activities.

## CALL OF THE WILD

Have you ever been sitting at your desk at work and noticed you felt completely unable to focus? Next time that happens, try taking a walk outside. Even a brief period spent experiencing the sights and sounds of plants and animals improves your ability to concentrate and renews your reserves of patience.

This phenomenon of directed attention fatigue is similar to attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), present in both children and adults. While spending time in natural environments benefits

everyone, researchers believe people with ADHD may especially see results.

## LEAVE YOUR TROUBLES OUTSIDE

Approximately 85 percent of Americans don’t have access to forests, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, but everyone can reap the benefits of being in nature. Spending time in a park or garden, or strolling down a sidewalk lined with trees, provides some of the same benefits as walking through a traditional forest — inner calm and feelings of well-being.

About 350 million people suffer from depression worldwide. Treatment options for most are psychotherapy, medication or a combination of both. Ecotherapy is a treatment option that most people can access at little to no cost.

Researchers at the University of Essex found a walk in a park improved feelings of depression in about three-fourths of participants, and 90 percent felt a higher level of esteem.

Ready to take a walk for better health? Talk with your doctor about the potential benefit of getting outside and enjoying green spaces.

## MORE MELATONIN

When you were younger, did your parents ever send you outside to run around and exhaust yourself? Apparently, they were on the right track. This approach works for adults, too, but it isn't just the exercise that makes you sleep better at night.

Experiencing natural light and its fluctuations prompts your body to produce melatonin, a hormone that helps your body maintain a healthy sleep cycle. Adequate sleep is important — not only for feeling rested but also for things like concentration, proper judgment and memory.

When your body produces enough melatonin, you're more likely to sleep deeply through the night. A good night's sleep allows your brain to process the things you learned and did that day, consolidating memories and allowing you to retain new information.

## TAKE A FOREST BATH

Don't worry — you don't need a swimsuit or towel for this adventure. Forest bathing, also known as shinrin-yoku, is a Japanese healing method that refers to the act of simply spending time in the forest. It's not hiking or adventuring with any real destination in mind. You aren't trying to get somewhere. You're there to absorb the experience of being in nature.

The concept of shinrin-yoku is an important part of preventive healthcare in Japan and South Korea today and is supported by extensive research.

Known benefits include:

- better mood
- better sleep
- higher energy levels
- improved healing after surgery or illness
- lower blood pressure
- lower stress levels

Whether forest therapy is offered near you or not, you can practice shinrin-yoku on your own. Find a park or hiking trail nearby, ideally where you can be covered by a tree canopy, and set aside some time to meander and be present in the greenery that surrounds you.

# NOTHING TO Shrug Off

Shoulder problems can occur suddenly or over time, and they can significantly affect your daily life. That's why it's important to know how to recognize and prevent them.

Here's a primer on some common conditions that can affect one of the body's workhorse joints.

## ROTATOR CUFF TEARS

Made up of four muscles and tendons, the rotator cuff connects the shoulder blade to the humerus bone of the upper arm and is partly responsible for the shoulder's range of motion. When one of the tissues tears, often due to decades of use, it can be painful to raise or lower your arm and lay on the shoulder at night. Shoulder-specific stretches and exercises can help prevent rotator cuff tears by making the tissues stronger and more flexible.

## SPRAINS

Sprains most commonly affect the ligaments of the AC joint, one of four joints of the shoulder. The force from a blow, fall or collision can stretch or tear those tissues, causing swelling at the collarbone and pain with movement. When playing contact sports or doing chores around the home that have a high risk of falls, such as cleaning the gutters, consider wearing a shoulder brace or padding for protection.

## TENDINITIS

Variety is the spice of life, and for the shoulder, it's an important part of health. Repeating the same motion over hours and days — think repainting the rooms of your home or lifting boxes overhead — can irritate the tendons of the shoulder, causing tenderness and pain. It's important to take breaks in repetitive activities or, if possible, avoid painful ones altogether. Strength and flexibility exercises can help the shoulders better withstand heavy use.



Ready to stop shoulder pain? Start with your primary care provider (PCP). If you don't have a PCP, call (760) 892-3163 to find one near you.

In people older than 40, torn rotator cuffs tend to occur due to wear and tear on the tendons. When the injuries happen in younger adults, falls or other accidents are usually to blame, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.



## SHOULDER SURGERY GOES SMALL

Around eight in 10 people with torn rotator cuffs find symptom relief through rest, over-the-counter pain relievers, activity changes and other nonsurgical options, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. If an operation is necessary, however, it may not be as big as you think, according to Thomas Liu, M.D., Ph.D., Orthopedic Surgeon and independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital.

"For certain patients, especially those whose rotator cuff tears aren't extensive, a minimally invasive, typically outpatient procedure called arthroscopy may be an option," Dr. Liu said. "I make several small incisions instead of a large one and uses a scope fitted with a camera to see inside the joint. I use small instruments that fit into the incisions to reattach the torn tendon to the bone. Arthroscopy patients tend to have less pain and recover faster than open-surgery patients."

*Patient results may vary. Consult your doctor about the benefits and risks of any surgical procedure or treatment.*

*Dr. Liu is an independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital.*



# Sneaky SODIUM

Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure and put your heart at risk. Learn how sodium finds its way into your food and how you can avoid it.

## Ideal Intake



Adults should consume **fewer than 2,300mg** of sodium every day.



To **MAXIMIZE HEALTH BENEFITS**, adults should limit their daily sodium intake to **1,500mg a day or less.**



▶ People need fewer than **500mg of sodium** a day for their bodies to function properly.



Source: American Heart Association

## So Much Sodium

▶ Average Americans consume **more than 3,400mg** of sodium daily.

# >75%

**MORE THAN 75 PERCENT** of consumed sodium comes from prepackaged, processed and restaurant food — not table salt.

\* Many products — like chain pizza — contain **more sodium in the U.S.** than in other countries.



Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

## See Ya, Sodium

Prepare fresh meals and **avoid prepackaged, processed and restaurant foods** to cut most sodium out of your diet.



\* Check the **NUTRITION FACTS LABEL** for foods with 5 percent Daily Value of sodium or less and products marked "low sodium."

Gradually **reduce your sodium intake** and **use spices** to help your taste buds adjust.



Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



Rabani Zaheer, M.D., Cardiologist and independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital, reminds you to monitor your blood pressure on a regular basis. If you don't have a cardiologist, call (760) 892-3163 to find one near you.

Dr. Zaheer is an independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital.

### WANT TO READ MORE?

Visit [BarstowHospital.com/signup](http://BarstowHospital.com/signup) to receive other health and wellness articles and register for our eNewsletter.

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This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your doctor before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.

# Next Steps FOR JOINT PAIN

If you thought you'd need a joint replacement  
"someday," how do you know if someday is today?

Replacement joints now last longer — from 10 to 15 years to as long as 20 in some cases, according to the National Library of Medicine — offering younger patients years of pain-free living. You may be ready if:

- nonsurgical treatments, such as physical therapy and pain management, are not providing relief
- X-rays and other tests confirm damage to the joint
- your physician determines surgery is your best option



For more information about the joint replacement program at Barstow Community Hospital, call (760) 892-3163.

*Patient results may vary. Consult your doctor about the benefits and risks of any surgical procedure or treatment.*