

# Wellness Corner Connection

Topics for September:  
Healthy Aging  
Cholesterol Awareness  
Suicide Prevention

## Healthy Aging Month

*The population of older adults in the U.S. is growing rapidly; approximately 20% of Americans will be aged 65 years or older by 2030 (or 1 in 5 adults). (CDC)*

*Depression is the most prevalent mental health problem among older adults. It often adversely affects the course and complicates the treatment of other chronic diseases.*

*Staying physically active can help older adults maintain a healthy weight, remain strong and mobile and avoid depression.*

*Helping older adults find programs to keep them physically active can also help with social and emotional support, both key components in mobility and longevity.*

Know that you are the perfect age. Each year is special and precious, for you shall only live it once. *Be comfortable with growing older.*

— LOUISE HAY



**Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIFs**

## September is Healthy Aging Month

### You Can Actually Slow The Process



How many of you recall hearing your parents and grandparents utter the phrase "if I only knew then what I know now...". How many times have you caught yourself getting ready to say the same thing? Our second half of life can be some of our most rewarding years! We tend to be more confident than our younger self; we have gained wisdom and most times more patience. Yes our hair may have a few more strands of gray and our faces a few more lines, but there are many things we can do to keep our mind and body as healthy as it can be. Think about all that you still want and need to do! Here are some science-based "secrets" to help you do them. Although the advice may seem like common sense, it's not always easy to make the necessary changes to get there. The question is: how badly do you want to grow older gracefully? In other words, how important is having "quality of life"?

#### Eat Whole Foods

It's more a way of eating than a formal diet. You load up on veggies, fruits, whole grains, nuts, and low-fat dairy. You eat less fatty meats, butter, sugar, salt, and packaged foods.

Many studies have found that this diet can help you live longer and protects against heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's disease. Researchers believe one way it works is by physically changing parts of your chromosomes linked to age-related diseases. Our diets also play a key role in chronic inflammation, which has been linked to our risk of chronic diseases. There are certain foods connected to reducing inflammation. As long as you are not allergic to any, here are a few highly recommended:

- **Fruits and vegetables.** Most fruits and brightly colored vegetables naturally contain high levels of antioxidants and polyphenols — potentially protective compounds found in plants.
- **Nuts and seeds.** Studies have found that consuming nuts and seeds is associated with reduced markers of inflammation and a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- **Beverages.** The polyphenols in coffee and the flavonols in cocoa are thought to have anti-inflammatory properties. Green tea is also rich in both polyphenols and antioxidants. (Is this a contradiction to the Keto Diet? Read more on that later in the newsletter.)

#### Stay Connected

Loneliness is harmful to your health. If you feel lonely — whether you live alone or with someone, have lots of friends or none — you are more likely to get dementia or depression. Seniors who report feeling left out and isolated have more trouble with everyday tasks like bathing and climbing stairs. They also die earlier than less-lonely folks do. Researchers found that lonely people have higher levels of stress hormones that cause inflammation, or swelling, linked to arthritis and diabetes. Another study found more antibodies to certain herpes viruses in lonely people, a sign of stress in their immune system. So stay or make friends. Do volunteer work or simply help someone in need. Just connect.

#### Stay Optimistic

Life tests us in many ways. But positive thinking can be a powerful ally. When you choose to be optimistic and grateful, your mind and body respond in kind. People with a good outlook live longer and have fewer heart attacks and depression than more negative people. You can learn to be optimistic. It just takes time and practice. Things you can do include: 1) Smile, even fake smile. It can help lower stress; 2) Reframe. Spin your thoughts to the good things instead of dwelling on the bad; 3) Keep a gratitude journal; 4) Do good things for others; 5) Surround yourself with people who boost your spirits; 6) Accept things you can't change.

#### Physical Activity

You have heard this time and time again...move more! There is no way around it, physical activity does improve your overall wellbeing! Aim for at least 30 minutes every day. If that's too much, break it up into shorter sessions. Even just walking — especially if you do it briskly enough to feel a little breathless — delivers huge health benefits. It helps keep brain cells healthy by delivering more blood and oxygen. In fact, research suggests aerobic exercise may delay or improve symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and can lengthen your telomeres resulting in less cellular aging. (What are telomeres? Look further in the newsletter for the answer.)

Physical Activity also helps:

- Control weight
- Boost mood
- Keep bones and muscles strong
- Improve sleep
- Lessen risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol

All the things that affect the aging process.

*Question to ask yourself: Is your life worth taking care of?*

#### Get Help to Quit Smoking

We all know "Tobacco kills". It harms almost every organ in your body. Cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and other products with nicotine cause heart disease, cancer, lung and gum disease, and many other health problems. We also know, for those who have tried to quit, it's not easy!! Never stop trying because it's never too late to quit. **Your body begins to heal within 20 minutes of your last cigarette.** Your chance of a heart attack goes down right away. In a year, your odds of heart disease drop by half. You'll also live longer. Ask your doctor for help. As part of the wellness program, I can also help to arrange a smoking cessation right at your worksite. Why do it alone! Don't quit trying to quit! It's a matter of life and breath!

## Sleep Deprivation Can Quicken the Aging Process



Most of the time, we start to see the affect of aging just by looking in the mirror. Perhaps our skin doesn't have that youthful appearance it once had. Maybe the lines on your forehead or around your eyes seem a bit more prominent, developing into permanent creases. The color under your eyes seems a little bit darker than before. Yes, this image is the reality of aging...we grow up and we don't look quite the same. That's normal. However, what's going on in the instead matters even more. Beneath the surface, our body is aging too, and sleep loss can accelerate that process!

A study conducted by UCLA researchers discovered that just a single night of insufficient sleep potentially speed up the biological aging of cells in older adults. This might not seem like a big deal, but it has the potential to bring on many other diseases such as multiple sclerosis, heart disease, cancer and diabetes, just a few of them.

Another study revealed that regularly catching only a few hours of sleep can hinder metabolism and hormone production in a way that is similar to the effects of aging and the early stages of diabetes. Chronic sleep loss may speed the onset or increase the severity of age-related conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and memory loss. The researchers showed that just one week of sleep deprivation altered subject's hormone levels and their capacity to metabolize carbohydrates. People who trade sleep for work or play may get used to it and feel less fatigued. However, the effects it has on your body (and mind) are still occurring.

Insufficient sleep means that you get less than the 7 hours of nightly sleep that the American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends for adults. People in this particular study were allowed only four hours of sleep from 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. This type of sleep restriction is actually the most common form of sleep deprivation. Long work hours may prevent us from getting the sleep we need. On the other hand, we simply stay up too late at night, failing to make sleep a top priority. Getting a healthy night's sleep isn't just a way to keep the wrinkles away for a little longer — it will actually make you healthier.

*Resource: <http://sleepeducation.org>*

If you think the topic of "sleep deprivation" might be of interest in your workplace, please contact me to set up an education session or "lunch and learn". Wishing you a good night sleep! Pleasant dreams!



How many of us incorporate balance into our daily exercise routine? If I were to guess, I'd say not many at all. Balance is something we take for granted but, for a moment, imagine life without it. Close your eyes and stand on one foot. I recommend you have something sturdy near by to touch. It's difficult, right? Now imagine having that same disoriented, wobbly feeling on two feet with your eyes open. We don't really think about balance because its something that was hardwired into our bodies straight from birth, evolving and adapting as we matured. Basic balance is innate. However, some can master this skill to perfection with exercise and practice.

The word "vestibular" - referring to your inner ear, brain, and sense of balance—is not something many of us hear about or reference. Yet many likely experience the awkward and sometimes scary feeling of momentary loss of balance. Maybe its standing up too quickly, making a sudden move, or getting motion sickness on a boat or in a moving vehicle. Maybe its that nauseating room-spinning sensation one gets after too many alcoholic beverages. The good news about these episodes, they are temporary.

This is not the case for over 69,000 Americans (35%) aged 40 years and older who suffer from the mostly invisible and frequently debilitating symptoms of chronic imbalance associated with a vestibular disorder. It may come over time or all of a sudden, but either way these bouts of dizziness, vertigo, and nausea can make many of life's routine activities virtually intolerable. Just imagine going to sleep at night and hearing a high-pitched ringing in your ears. Or when trying to focus on something, everything around you seems to be spinning. These are things we don't give thought to if the problem does not exist. That is why Balance Awareness Week was created to bring attention to this "hidden" challenge for so many. During this week, try to focus on your balance and work on improving and sustaining it through simple balancing exercising you can do. Incorporate balance challenges into your normal workout by standing on one foot while doing bicep curls. Or take a break from sitting at your desk and stand on one foot (you can keep your eyes open ☺).

Balance is especially a challenge as we get older. Practicing balance can not only improve ones performance in making quick turns and lunges, but it will improve stability as we age to prevent falls and accidents that can lead to other health problems. Sudden changes in your ability to balance can indicate some more serious health issues so its important to keep tabs on your current ability. To find out some exercises to help improve your balance, go to:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/multimedia/balance-exercises/sls-20076853>

*Resource: VeDa—highly respected source of scientifically credible information on vestibular disorders.*



## How Old Are You, Really? Chronological vs. Biological Age

### You may be older or younger than you think, feel or look



New research from Brigham Young University reveals we may actually be able to slow down one type of aging—the kind that occurs inside our cells. But you have to be willing to sweat! Just because you turn a certain age on your birthday doesn't mean that is your biological age. We all know folks who seem younger than their actual age. This research has proven that the more physically active we are, the less biological aging takes place in our bodies.

The study which was published in the medical journal *Preventive Medicine* states that people who engage consistently in high levels of physical activity have significantly longer telomeres than those who have a sedentary lifestyle, as well as those who are only moderately active. *Telomeres* are the protein endcaps of our chromosomes. Think of them as the plastic tips on your shoelaces. They're like our biological clock and are enormously connected with age; each time a cell replicates, we lose a tiny bit of the endcaps. Therefore, the older we get, the shorter our telomeres.

Exercise science professor Larry Tucker, from BYU, found adults with high physical activity levels have telomeres with a biological aging advantage of nine years over those who are sedentary, and a seven-year advantage compared to those who are moderately active. To be highly active, women had to engage in 30 minutes of jogging per day (40 minutes for men), five days a week.

CDC's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey is one of the few indexes that captures telomere length values from the study participants. It showed that the shortest telomeres came from sedentary people. Also there was not a significant difference in telomere length between those with



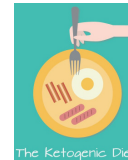
low or moderate physical activity and the sedentary people. Keep in mind that the exact "science" behind how exercise preserves telomeres is not known, there is believed to be a link with ones level of inflammation and *oxidative stress* (happens when the amount of free radicals, or impaired molecules, outnumber the amount of antioxidants in our body). These two factors have been known to be suppressed with regular physical activity. We have always known that a consistent regimen of physical activity in our lives helps to reduce mortality and prolong life. Now, as studies start to reveal such as the one mentioned here, we know part of that longevity is due to the preservation of telomeres.



Resource: Science Daily 2017

## Ketogenic Diet: Is this ultimate low-carb diet good for you?

I have been hearing more and more people turning to the ketogenic "keto" diet for weight loss. One definition for the word "diet" is "a special course of food to which a person restricts themselves, either to lose weight or for medical reasons." (Oxford Dictionary) And although, this may be yet another option for quickly dropping those extra pounds, it's important to ask oneself "Is the keto diet safe and is it sustainable?"



### What is the ketogenic (keto) diet?

In essence, it is a diet that causes the body to release ketones into the bloodstream. Most cells prefer to use blood sugar, which comes from carbohydrates, as the body's main source of energy. In the absence of circulating blood sugar from food, we start breaking down stored fat into molecules called ketone bodies (the process is called ketosis). Once you reach ketosis, most cells will use ketone bodies to generate energy until we start eating carbohydrates again. The shift, from using circulating glucose to breaking down stored fat as a source of energy, usually happens over two to four days of eating fewer than 20 to 50 grams of carbohydrates per day. Keep in mind that this is a highly individualized process, and some people need a more restricted diet to start producing enough ketones. Because it lacks carbohydrates, a ketogenic diet is rich in proteins and fats. It typically includes plenty of meats, eggs, processed meats, sausages, cheeses, fish, nuts, butter, oils, seeds, and fibrous vegetables. This may sound like a dream diet to some. But because it is so restrictive, it is really hard to follow over the long run. Carbohydrates normally account for at least 50% of the typical American diet. One of the main criticisms of this diet is that many people tend to eat **too much protein and poor-quality fats from processed foods**, with very few fruits and vegetables. People with kidney disease need to be cautious because this diet could worsen their condition. Additionally, some people have felt a little tired in the beginning, while some may have bad breath, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and sleep problems.

### Is a ketogenic diet healthy?

There is solid evidence showing that a ketogenic diet reduces seizures in children, sometimes as effectively as medication, but keep in mind, these are typically done in a very controlled environment with physician supervision. As a result of such success, questions have been raised about the possible benefits for other brain disorders such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, sleep disorders, autism, and even brain cancer. However, there are no human studies to support recommending ketosis to treat these conditions at this time.

Weight loss is the primary reason people go on the ketogenic diet. Previous research shows good evidence of a faster weight loss when patients go on a ketogenic or very low carbohydrate diet compared to participants on a more traditional low-fat diet, or even a Mediterranean diet. However, that difference in weight loss seems to disappear over time. Yet the concern remains, what will happen once the person stops and goes back to his/her old eating habits?

A ketogenic diet also has been shown to improve blood sugar control for patients with type 2 diabetes, at least in the short term. There is even more controversy when we consider the effect on cholesterol levels. A few studies show some patients have increase in cholesterol levels in the beginning, only to see cholesterol fall a few months later. However, there is no long-term research analyzing its effects over time on both diabetes or high cholesterol.

### So what are some of the key take-aways from a ketogenic diet review?

A ketogenic diet could be an interesting alternative to treat certain conditions, and may accelerate weight loss. But it is hard to follow and it can be heavy on red meat and other fatty, processed, and salty foods that are notoriously unhealthy. We also do not know much about its long-term effects, probably because it's so hard to stick with that people can't eat this way for a long time. It is also important to remember that "**yo-yo diets**" that lead to rapid weight loss fluctuation are associated with increased mortality. Instead of engaging in the next popular diet that would last only a few weeks to months (for most people that includes a ketogenic diet), try to embrace change that is sustainable over the long term. A balanced, unprocessed diet, rich in very colorful fruits and vegetables, lean meats, fish, whole grains, nuts, seeds, healthy fats, and lots of water seems to have the best evidence for a long, healthier, vibrant life. So if you are considering the keto diet, have a plan for how you will change your lifestyle after the diet is over. Through support and coaching, the transition can be a success.

## Do You Know Your Lipid Profile?

Regardless of age, anyone can have high cholesterol. September is National Cholesterol Education Month. This is a good time to get your blood checked, learn your lipid profile and determine what steps are needed to lower it if it's high. There are foods and lifestyle changes that can positively impact your numbers. More than 102 million American Adults (20 years or older) have total cholesterol levels at or above 200 mg/dL, which is above healthy levels. More than 35 million of these people have levels of 240 mg/dL or higher which is putting them at an elevated risk for heart disease. Do you know your numbers?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body and in many foods. Cholesterol is needed for our bodies to function normally but the miraculous thing is, your liver makes all that you need. Yet through our food and lifestyle choices, as well as genetics, our body can build up bad cholesterol (LDL's) in our arteries. With time, these deposits will narrow those arteries, putting you at risk for heart disease and stroke.

Unless you regularly get your blood cholesterol checked, you may not know if you have high cholesterol because usually there are no symptoms. It is recommended that adults aged 20 years or older have their lipidprotein checked every 5 years. The following chart shows optimal lipid levels for adults men and women:

Desirable Cholesterol Levels—Men age 20 or older		Desirable Cholesterol Levels—Women age 20 or older	
Total Cholesterol	125 to 200 mg/dL	Total Cholesterol	125 to 200 mg/dL
Low LDL ("bad") Cholesterol	Less than 100 mg/dL	Low LDL ("bad") Cholesterol	Less than 100 mg/dL
High LDL ("good") Cholesterol	40 mg/dL or higher	High LDL ("good") Cholesterol	50 mg/dL or higher
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL	Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL

### If you have high cholesterol, what can you do to lower it?

Your doctor may prescribe medications to treat your high cholesterol. In addition, you can lower your cholesterol levels through lifestyle changes:

- Low-fat and high-fiber food (Eat more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and whole grains).
- For adults, getting at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate or 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity a week.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Don't smoke (try to quit if you so smoke).

Resource: [https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/cholesterol\\_education\\_month.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/cholesterol_education_month.htm)

## SUICIDE IN AMERICA: THE FACTS

September is Suicide Prevention Month. Suicidal thoughts, much like mental health conditions, can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. In fact, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition. Suicidal thoughts, although common, should not be considered normal and often indicate more serious issues. According to the CDC, suicide rates have increased by 30% since 1999. Nearly 45,000 lives are lost to suicide each year, leaving behind friends and family members to navigate the tragedy and deal with the heartbreak. In many cases, friends and families affected by a suicide loss (often called "suicide loss survivors") are left in the dark. Too often the feelings of shame and stigma prevent them from talking openly.

### KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

- Threats or comments about killing themselves, also known as suicidal ideation, can begin with seemingly harmless thoughts like "I wish I wasn't here" but can become more overt and dangerous
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Social withdrawal from friends, family and the community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Talking, writing or thinking about death
- Impulsive or reckless behavior

### THE DEMOGRAPHICS

- Men die by suicide 3.5x more often than women.
- White males accounted for 7 of 10 suicides in 2014.
- The rate of suicide is highest among middle-aged people

Suicide is the  
10TH LEADING  
CAUSE  
of death in the U.S.

### THE MEANS

- Firearms account for more than 50% of all completed suicides
- Suffocation accounts for more than 20%
- Poisoning accounts for more than 16%

### THE HOPE

- 90% of people who die by suicide have a mental disorder at the time of their deaths. There are treatments available that can help address underlying health issues that put people at risk for suicide.
- More than 660,000 people in the U.S. have been trained in Mental Health First Aid and now have the ability to recognize when someone may be in distress and the skills to provide support and get people to the help they may need.

### WHY EMPLOYERS SHOULD CARE

- 1 in 5 American adults has a mental illness
- 40% of employees with a mental illness take time off because of it—up to 10 days a year
- 1 in 10 full-time employees has an addiction

**Mental Health First Aid at Work:** There are workplace mental health training programs offered to teach participants how to notice and support an individual who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use concern or crisis. This training can help create a culture of health and empower colleagues to **recognize signs, reach out,** and **connect** someone to the right resources. Contact me if you are interested in setting something up in your workplace.  
<https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org>



## Smart Before-Bed Snacks

If hunger strikes at night, it's okay to have a snack before turning out the lights, but what you eat could determine how well you sleep. It's important not to eat something heavy that will keep your body awake trying to digest it. Reach for low-calorie, sleep-inducing foods, full of nutrients that will keep you satisfied but not stuffed! Here are a few great options for you to consider:

**Reduced-Fat Cheese**—Say cheese! This savory treat has protein and fat, so it'll stop hunger in its tracks. Just stick with light varieties, preferably portion controlled to avoid overdoing it!

**Nonfat Greek Yogurt**—The plain kind is the top pick to stave off late-night hunger. It's loaded with protein and low in calories. Avoid the flavored kind, which are usually higher in calories and chockfull of sugar. If it's too tart on its own, stir in a little natural sweetener and vanilla extract. Pre-portioned containers are great for an anytime snack.



### Turkey-Pickle Roll-Up

You've probably heard that turkey makes you sleepy, so it makes sense that it's a good pre-bed snack. No need for a full-on sandwich though! Wrap turkey slices around some pickle or cucumber spears for a low-calorie snack. Dunk in mustard for added flavor.

### Apple + Peanut Butter

With this easy-to-make snack, the apple's filling fiber, and PB's healthy fat team up to tame your hunger. Stick with a single tablespoon of peanut butter to avoid a too-heavy treat.



### Chickpeas

These little legumes provide a great punch of protein and other important nutrients. Grab a can, drain and rinse, and enjoy a 1/2-cup serving for only around 110 calories. Even better: Crunchy chickpea snacks are becoming increasingly popular. Try the kinds by Biena, or make your own with this simple recipe.

### Recipe Corner

#### Crispy Roasted Chickpeas

1/4th of recipe (about 1/4 cup): 92 calories, 1.5g fat (0g sat fat), 337mg sodium, 15.5g carbs, 4.5g fiber, 1g sugars, 5g protein

1. Preheat oven to 400F. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick spray.
2. Drain and rinse a 15-ounce can of chickpeas/garbanzo beans. Thoroughly pat dry. Discard any skins that were removed while drying.
3. Place beans on the baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes.
4. Rearrange beans on the sheet, either with a spatula or by gently shaking the sheet (using an oven mitt). Bake until browned, 15 to 25 minutes.
5. Transfer beans to a medium bowl. Drizzle with 1/4 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil, and sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon salt. If you like, add chili powder, garlic powder, and/or onion powder. Toss to coat.
6. Let cool for a crispier snack, or enjoy warm!

By Lisa Lillien, a.k.a. Hungry Girl. Reviewed by a board-certified physician  
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The key to the future in an aging society is not found in increasing just our life span; we need to increase our health span at the same time. Quote by: Chuck Norris