



# Desert Health®

The Valley's Leading Resource for Health and Wellness

May/June 2020

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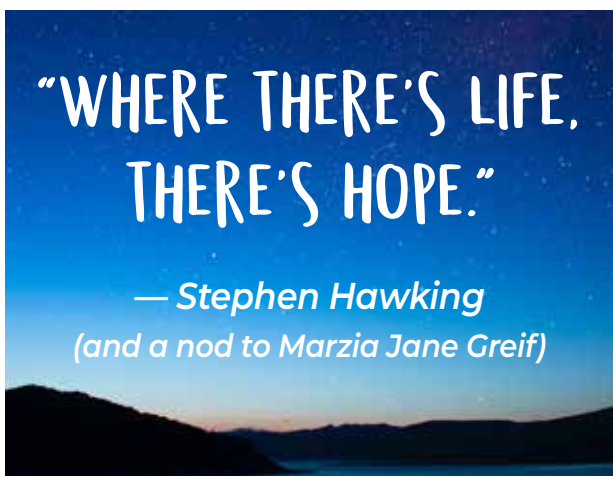
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How are you doing? During this time we've been thinking of you, dear readers, and eager to present this special issue inspiring health and hope from our local wellness community.

There has never been a more important time to build and maintain a healthy immune system. But how do you focus on good health when so much in your world seems bad? Eat right when all you want is a warm bowl of comfort food? Stay light when you feel you're carrying the weight of the world? Focus when your mind seems so scattered?

Suffering and pain are a part of life's journey and no matter the magnitude, we must remember that this, too, is simply a moment in time that will pass. And how we treat ourselves now will either hinder or help us on the other side.

"When difficulties arise, it's often our instinct to avoid and evade, to run and hide," says mindfulness instructor Tamara Levitt. "But when we try to escape

our suffering, it intensifies. We must learn to move through with courage and gentleness." When we can touch suffering without being broken by it, she adds, we hurt much less and these challenging times can be a source of transformation and growth.

In this issue, you'll find recommendations for getting, or staying, on track from both medical and wellness professionals: from immunity boosting foods and supplements to simple practices for reducing stress and anxiety; from local COVID-19 resources to tasty recipes to keep you strong; from a better night's sleep to exercising in today's environment and more.

"Beyond the hurt of this moment, beyond the murky darkness, there will be space and warmth and light."  
- Tamara Levitt

Even if you haven't used your time wisely, it's not too late to start. Your health is your most important ally at this time; so, treat your body and mind with kindness, compassion and loving care, and remember "Beyond the hurt of this moment, beyond the murky darkness, there will be space and warmth and light."



Every human on our planet is struggling right now. For some, it's simply getting through the day; for others, it's coping with mortality in unimaginable circumstances.

If the challenges we are facing are taking their toll mentally, you are not alone. Many psychologists agree that the ability to comprehend the magnitude of what is going on in the world right now is beyond human capacity.

One way to ease the dark clouds inside is to look outside. The blue skies above are one of many positive changes that have occurred from our "human pause," and marveling at the natural beauty surrounding us right now can be very therapeutic and inspiring.

So, we thought we'd share some good news from around the globe and reflections from *Desert Health* readers throughout the country on the wonder they have found in these unprecedented times.

**Blue skies abound**  
Many believe this pause is a strong message from Mother Earth. When you consider the change in our global environment, it's hard not to agree.

Last year, India was once again home to 14 of the top 20 cities with the most hazardous air quality in the world.<sup>1</sup> Now, for the first time in over two decades some say, residents in the capital city New Delhi are looking up at blue skies. Air Quality Index (AQI) readings for the fifth city on the list are standardly 150 on a good day and often up to 500. In March they saw 38.<sup>2</sup>

China, a close second with 14 of the top 50 cities, is experiencing the same. NASA reports that concentrations of nitrogen dioxide from cars, power plants and industry significantly decreased when the quarantine was in place as shown on the satellite images on page 16. The reduction was first apparent near Wuhan and eventually spread across the country.<sup>3</sup>

Other major cities are enjoying the same, even here at home. *Los Angeles Magazine* reported that March EPA readings showed LA with its cleanest air ever recorded.<sup>4</sup>

How nice it would be if these indisputable facts led to cleaner energy, more conscious thinking and healthier populations.

Continued on page 16



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## Hello, Friends ~

My goodness! Who would have ever thought 2020 would find us so far apart, yet so close at heart in circumstances beyond our wildest imagination?

The sign above sits on our counter as a constant reminder of the patience and compassion we all need to have with each other right now, and also a reminder to laugh often. The funniest thing? After beating cancer last year, I bought a 2020 planner with BEST YEAR EVER emblazoned on the front (sigh).

I do believe many incredible things will come out of this tumultuous time. You'll read about many that already have in our front page story "Pause and Reflect." But the journey certainly has been challenging.

To make matters worse, I lost my beloved father in March. He was the healthiest 81 year old I knew playing golf daily and shooting his age (or better) an impressive 170 times. He counted. Of course he did. That was my Dad.

In January, he was diagnosed with a large glioblastoma (brain tumor) which shocked us all. There were a few signs - forgetfulness, trouble lining up putts - but the diagnosis came out of the blue.

We were very close and I rushed to his side to try and save him with all my research on natural therapies including the keto diet, essential oils and herbs to complement his radiation. I even introduced the old soldier to meditation and breathe work which helped to calm seizures he faced.



*Golf was his passion. Dad went to college on a Francis Ouimet scholarship, worked in the industry, played his entire life, and loved visiting during our local tournaments.*

But the tumor was too big and we lost him March 6. He instinctively knew he was leaving and asked that I fly back immediately. I took a red-eye to Georgia and was there when he woke the next morning. We shared our last day in the sun. The next morning EMTs were taking him to the hospital. We were blessed to be by his side 24/7 sleeping in the hospital and then the hospice home. My heart breaks for those facing these same circumstances today. It is truly unfathomable.

My father made a graceful exit at just the right time, limiting his suffering and ours. On my birthday, March 15, I received an electronic card from him which he made and scheduled on February 22. He signed it with the mantra I recommended and he repeated often, "I am happy. I am healthy. I am at peace." I will cherish this card forever.



Columnist George Adolph

We lost another great man this year, *Desert Health* contributor, George Adolph. Since 2013, George shared life as an octogenarian in his column "Time Flies." With humor and passion, he helped us understand the beauty and challenges of an experienced life. His work lives on and can be found at [www.DesertHealthNews.com](http://www.DesertHealthNews.com). Our heart goes out to his wife, Carol, and their family. Go in peace and fly, my friend.

We evolve most fully when we learn to accept change and to celebrate it all. Through the good times and bad, life goes on. We lose loved ones and others are born.

We certainly want to celebrate baby Rose Hastings, who arrived April 15 to proud parents Nick and Katie Baumann. Even with this miraculous event taking place, Dr. Nick made time to send in his article for this issue, so please enjoy, and thank you, Nick!

We cherish each and every one of you and thank you for reading *Desert Health*. We would not be here without the continued support of our marketing partners. So, when you visit their establishments, please thank them as well.

May you find peace and happiness in this day and the many days to come.

With sincere appreciation ~

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## Your Health Matters

with Janet Zappala



### Defining Our Response to Stress in Defining Times

What do we learn when we're put into a stressful situation that's beyond our control? First, we learn how much we're able to handle - mentally, emotionally and physically. The coronavirus pandemic has caused nearly insurmountable amounts of stress for almost every human being on the planet. Knowing that, alone, is stressful, but it's what we do in times like these that will define us forever.

Normally, when we experience stress, we find ways to deal with it, but in unprecedented times like COVID-19, it's stress on steroids. The element of the unknown creates anxiety, a feeling of powerlessness. We ask ourselves, "Will we get the virus? Will our loved ones get sick?" Here are a few suggestions on how to combat stress during this challenging time:

**Be ready, be prepared.** The positive news is, the pandemic has taught us a lot about how to prepare better. Just as we prep for weather-related emergencies and earthquakes, we should have a stockpile of supplies (paper products, canned foods and water), so hoarding doesn't become an issue at the height of an emergency. When people have the necessary supplies, stress levels will dissipate dramatically and healthy coping will be more the norm than the exception. The American Red Cross recommends being Red Cross Ready with lists of essential items that can be found on their website.

**Make a plan.** Talk with your family members and neighbors about what to do during emergencies. Be informed and know the risks where you live. Then, make a plan to write out the steps you can take to stay safe.

**Focus on a hobby or project.** Having a plan and supplies should provide some peace of mind, but in the face of a health crisis, sheltering in place creates a whole new set of issues and can cause angst. In times of adversity and big change, it is essential to find personal ways to manage and alleviate your stress.

I find that working on a skill takes so much concentration I can't think of anything else except the task at hand. In my case, this is playing the piano. It's something I've found that gives me a sense of calm and accomplishment; my stress just melts away. For you, it could be painting, gardening or photography. Find something challenging and rewarding on which to focus.

**Exercise your stress away.** Exercise is also a major stress reliever and health enhancer. Thankfully, my Zumba instructor has been streaming classes on Facebook so that exercise is still a part of my routine. Whether it is dancing, walking, riding a bike or playing with your pet, movement does a body and mind good.

**Establish a routine.** In times of distress, we may not stick to our routines, but it's then that we need them the most. Our routines provide comfort and a sense of normalcy in extremely abnormal times. If you can't keep your previous routine, create a new one. Having the structure of a routine is important.

**Maintain connection.** We can also combat stress by talking with loved ones and friends. With today's technology, there's no shortage of creative ways to reach out and stay in touch.

**Practice gratitude.** And finally, be grateful for all the good in your life. An attitude of gratitude helps us focus on our blessings and less on what's creating difficulty. Thinking positively reminds us that this too shall pass.

*Janet Zappala is a certified nutritional consultant, an Emmy-award-winning anchor and reporter, and the creator and host of Your Health Matters. Find her on Facebook @ JanetZappalaYourHealthMatters.*

## Healthcare District Launches COVID-19 Resource Center

*Funds also approved to support at-risk populations*

The Desert Healthcare District (DHCD) has launched an online resource for local residents offering information on programs and services available during the coronavirus crisis. From food distribution and rental assistance to testing sites and small business loans, the webpage is available in both English and Spanish, and is being translated into Purépecha, the indigenous language used by many from the Mexican state of Michoacán who make up a large part of the farm-working community in the Eastern Valley.

By visiting [DHCD.org](http://DHCD.org), residents can find links to connect with financial assistance and emergency cash relief as well as information on rapid COVID-19 testing, donating personal protective equipment to local clinics and hospitals, videos on proper hygiene practices and more. The portal is updated daily to provide the nearly half-million people served by DHCD with the latest information available and is intended to resolve confusion about public health issues related to the virus. In addition to district information, the page includes links to other sites and pre-approves those resources to bring users the best possible information.

"Desert Healthcare District recognizes that individuals and families across our region are struggling with overwhelming health and economic challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic," said CEO Conrado Bárzaga, MD. "As one of the largest supporters of health and wellness programs and services in the Coachella Valley, we felt it was important to provide a hub for regional assistance and facts to help our constituents." Dr. Bárzaga delivers a weekly video update on the page in English and Spanish.

DHCD is a trusted source for health and wellness information and supports a multi-pronged, collective impact approach to dealing with health issues, including the coronavirus. In April, the district board allocated \$350,000 for rapid COVID-19 testing at three federally-qualified health centers in the valley: Borrego Health, Clinicas de Salud del Pueblo and Desert AIDS Project, which provide primary care for uninsured, minority and low-income populations. The funding will provide the clinics with access to about 10,000 rapid tests, which deliver results in approximately 15 minutes.

The board also approved a \$1.2 million COVID-19 pandemic aid package to support non-profit service providers, health care professionals and other agencies providing critical assistance to at-risk populations. The aid was distributed to FIND Food Bank, organizations serving the homeless, migrant worker communities, nonprofits, public education efforts, a fund providing low-income families with \$200 for basic living expenses and a health care safety net to prevent hospital emergency rooms from becoming overwhelmed by patients.

"It is critical that the more than 80,000 uninsured people in the Coachella Valley have access to care, which in turn helps protect the entire community," Bárzaga said.

For more information, visit [www.DHCD.org](http://www.DHCD.org) or call (760) 323.6113.



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As the world around us changes, at least one thing stays the same—our commitment to your health and safety. If you come to one of our hospitals for an emergency or a necessary surgery, rest assured that we have extra precautions in place for your safety. COVID-19 patients remain in a separate area, our teams wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and common areas receive constant cleaning. We're here for you with the expertise and compassion that makes us A Community Built on Care.



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Please let us know if you have any questions by calling our clinics or visiting our website.

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## Novel Therapy for Early Stage Lung Cancer

*Up to 90 percent success rate with SBRT*

By Ted Ling, MD

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in the United States. It accounts for approximately one out of every five malignancies in men and one out of nine malignancies in women. The average age at diagnosis is 70 years old. Over the past decade, the overall incidence of lung cancer has decreased due to decades of public education and government policy. Nonetheless, lung cancer remains the most frequent cause of cancer death in this country making up nearly 25 percent of all cancer deaths.

Lung cancer is divided broadly into two major types: non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and small cell lung cancer (SCLC). By far the most commonly diagnosed is NSCLC accounting for nearly 90 percent of lung cancer cases. Treatment for NSCLC is typically multi-modality including some combination of radiation therapy, chemotherapy and surgery. Each case is unique and requires collaboration between a multidisciplinary team of oncologists and surgeons.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of NSCLC cases are diagnosed at a very advanced stage. Only about 15 percent of NSCLC are diagnosed while the disease is still at an early stage. Despite the very serious prognosis of NSCLC, many people with early stage disease can still be cured. The advent of low dose CT scan screening protocols has improved the rate of earlier detection. Surgery remains one of the mainstays of treatment for early stage NSCLC. However, there is also another novel non-invasive approach called stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) that has achieved similar cure rates in many studies.

SBRT is a form of radiation treatment which utilizes many external x-ray beams and aims them to treat a tumor. SBRT has been employed in several types of cancer, but has found particular widespread utility in early stage NSCLC. SBRT differs from conventional radiation therapy in the amount of dose that can be delivered per treatment. With SBRT, physicians are able to deliver a greater dose over the course of fewer treatments. This has resulted in a much higher success rate in comparison to conventional radiation therapy for early stage NSCLC.

SBRT is delivered in a radiation oncology department under the supervision of a team of radiation oncology physicians, radiation therapists and medical physicists. Treatment planning for SBRT begins with diagnostic imaging to locate and determine the tumor to be treated. This planning session involves mapping the target area as it moves during the patient's breathing cycle. This helps improve beam accuracy during treatment. The radiation oncologist works with medical physicists using advanced computer software to target the tumor while avoiding surrounding normal tissues. Complex software algorithms allow the beams to target a single point in three-dimensional space with millimeter accuracy. Advanced immobilization and tracking techniques help deliver the dose accurately to the target. Modern radiation therapy techniques also allow for safe exposure to normal structures while maximizing therapeutic effect of the radiation dose to the tumor.

Patients with major medical co-morbidities or health problems may not be candidates for surgery. Others may be poor candidates for surgery due to risk of functional deficit. These same patients, however, are often good candidates for SBRT. The recovery time for SBRT is minimal and the risk of functional decline is much smaller. A conventional course of standard radiation therapy typically takes five to eight weeks to complete. By contrast, a course of SBRT is given as one to five treatment sessions over the course of one to two weeks. The nature of the beam targeting in SBRT can make it particularly effective for treating small, well-defined tumors in inoperable or surgically risky locations. The past few decades have produced convincing data from the United States, Europe and Japan demonstrating that SBRT may be the treatment modality of choice for patients for whom surgery may not be an optimal treatment. The side effects vary from patient to patient and should be discussed in detail with the treating radiation oncologist.

Each lung cancer diagnosis is unique and should be discussed individually with an interdisciplinary oncology team. In early stage disease that is amenable to radiation therapy, SBRT should be strongly considered as a viable treatment modality. The side effect profile is very tolerable in a majority of patients. Success rates have been reported as high as 80 to 90 percent in properly selected patients.

*Dr. Ling is a board-certified radiation oncologist with 21st Century Oncology based in Palm Desert, Rancho Mirage and Yucca Valley and a member of Desert Doctors. For questions, please contact (760) 200.8777 or visit [www.21co.com/location/psc](http://www.21co.com/location/psc) or [www.DesertDoctors.org](http://www.DesertDoctors.org).*

## HARC Releases 2019 Community Health Data

*Research and statistics available to all*

This past March, Health Assessment and Research for Communities (HARC), which has been tracking our community's health for the past 14 years, released their latest data on the well-being and quality of life for Coachella Valley residents.

While the global pandemic is certain to change these 2019 statistics, the information obtained on hundreds of topics is invaluable to those seeking grants, reporting on local health care, allocating funding, or seeking baseline information on the health of our local population. By using the information to demonstrate needs, the data has helped bring in over \$15 million in funding since 2007.

During 2019, HARC conducted the Community Health Survey via random-digit-dialing of residents in the valley to obtain a representative snapshot for data that is not available from any other source. The effort was underwritten by the Desert Healthcare District along with support from a number of local health care, government and non-profit organizations.

The survey provides updates on many common topics such as number of insured, chronic disease, mental health and the health of our children, and adds many new topics including housing stability, loneliness, opioid use, recreational marijuana, adverse childhood experiences, conversations with children regarding social media, and more.

The information is currently available in a downloadable Executive Report which includes summaries, explanations and interpretations of the data along with accompanying data visualizations. Thanks to a grant from the City of Palm Desert, you can also request a free hard copy be mailed while supplies last. The data will be available on HARC's searchable database, HARCSearch, later this year; statistics from 2007-2016 are currently available at that site.

For more information, visit [www.harcddata.org](http://www.harcddata.org).



# Out of the Darkness, Into the Light

The inspiring story of Peter Li

By Lauren Del Sarto

This year, an incredible young man came into my life. While I have yet to meet him personally, I can confidently say he is an extremely accomplished and compassionate human being.

Peter Li is a spokesperson, author and inspirational speaker. He has written and produced an award-winning movie, attended the Emmys and published a book. He speaks publicly about changing anger and resentment into hope and possibility, and does it all from his wheelchair with no mobility and dependent on a ventilator to breathe.

At nine, Li was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy (MD), a genetic disease that causes progressive weakness and loss of muscle mass. His doctors estimated he'd live to his early 20s; today he is 41.

Li's family fled Vietnam when he was six months. He now has four siblings including a younger brother, Jason, 39, who also has MD. His strength comes from his parents, especially his mother, who took care of both of them until Peter was 29 and Jason 26. They now live at Angel View residential care facility in Desert Hot Springs, which offers a home environment, full nursing staff and growth opportunities for those with disabilities.



Spokesperson, author and motivational speaker Peter Li with his mother Lily Li

"Angel View is my home away from home," says Li. "They took away the burden that I had for 14 years; the burden of always asking my mom for assistance, and she doesn't have to worry or take care of me which she did for so long." It is that heavy burden he felt and could see in his mother's eyes that spurred the idea for his book, *Fueled by Misery* (2017). The book took him 17 years to write with a laser-pointed mouse controlled by slight head movements, one click at a time.

"My mom inspired me because I couldn't tell her how I felt about everything," he says. "I didn't want her to blame herself that I was born this way. I didn't want to see that from her and I knew telling her wouldn't change anything."

So, he always put on a happy face and decided to write out his emotions. "I was mad and sad for a very long time, probably 14 years. In those years, life wasn't fair to me. I was angry at why I was born like this and why I was even born at all. All I could do was watch people enjoying life, the laughter, the smiles, hanging out with friends, the school trips and especially people falling in love. I was envious of all that. I thought maybe I am just here to watch, and for other people to learn the words humble and humility. I never asked for this."

He decided to turn all of his emotions and thoughts into a book in an effort to help others. "I wanted to help the mothers out there who have a child with MD. People with MD don't openly tell their moms what they're going through. I want those moms to get a glimpse of the emotions their child is feeling."

*Fueled by Misery* offers readers an honest glimpse inside life with MD and, as his publisher describes, is not for the faint of heart. But it is also a story of hope as you see

Continued on page 18

# The Insomnia Complaint

By Stuart J. Menn, MD

"I have difficulty falling asleep," "I wake up frequently and cannot easily go back to sleep" and "I wake up too early in the morning" are by far the most common sleep disturbance complaints we hear in sleep medicine. When accompanied by daytime consequences of fatigue, tiredness, lassitude and foggy thinking, the diagnosis is insomnia.

### What defines insomnia?

Most people will occasionally sleep poorly at times of illness, stress or strange sleeping conditions; however, when this complaint occurs at least three nights a week and has been going on for at least three months, the term "chronic insomnia" is used. It can be very distressing and is a serious problem. The National Sleep Foundation surveys indicate that 10 to 15 percent of Americans report having chronic insomnia.

### What causes insomnia?

Chronic insomnia can be the result of a variety of causes including medical conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), gastro-esophageal reflux and Parkinson's disorder. Restless leg syndrome and sleep apnea also can present as insomnia. Medication used to treat these and other conditions may further lead to poor sleeping. Therefore, the onset of insomnia coinciding with starting a particular medication should always be considered.

Psycho-social conditions often cause poor sleep as well. This is especially common in a variety of depressive and psychotic disorders. Less commonly, the cause of apparent insomnia is a misalignment between an individual's circadian rhythm (internal body clock) and the desired sleep-wake schedule. Examples of this are extreme night-owls and morning larks. Night owls, for example, may not be able to fall asleep until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. and then not naturally wake up until 11 a.m.

My first step in managing the chronic insomnia patient is to make certain that these known causes for poor sleep are addressed. Finally, in many cases I see in my sleep medicine practice, there is no clear cause. This is particularly common in long-standing insomnia of several years. When this occurs, attention is shifted from the precipitating cause to identifying any perpetuating factors unknowingly taking place that are contributing to and maintaining the insomnia.



Treatment for insomnia begins with changing sleep habits.

Continued on page 19

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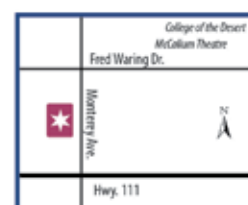
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## Greater Accuracy for Prostate Cancer Detection

*From random pokes to highly targeted precision*

By Bernadette M. Greenwood, BSc, PG Cert, RT (R)(MR)(ARRT)

The days of poke and hope are over! For decades, prostate biopsies have been performed in a random, systematic fashion. An ultrasound probe is inserted into the patient's rectum and an image of the shape of the prostate gland is obtained. Random, systematic cores are taken out at the apex level (bottom), the mid-gland level and the base (top). This is conventionally known as transrectal ultrasound guided biopsy or TRUS biopsy and has been the standard for decades. This procedure is usually performed in an outpatient setting.

### MRI-Guided Biopsy improves diagnostic performance

With the advent of multiparametric MRI, we are now able to look at detailed images of the prostate gland and aim the biopsy needle toward a specific target rather than systematically sampling 10, 12 or 18 cores or more. MRI allows us to see anatomic and morphologic features as well as functional information like perfusion, or blood flow and diffusion, movement of water molecules between cells. These functional sequences add great value and improve diagnostic performance.

### Benefits of diffusion-weighted imaging

A special attribute of diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI) is that we can mathematically calculate something called apparent diffusion coefficient value or ADC. This number is derived from the diffusion sequence and reflects the amount of restriction of water movement. This is referred to as "restricted diffusion." The lower the ADC value, the more likely malignancy is present - there is an inverse, linear relationship between ADC value and tumor aggressiveness. This relationship has been well-published in the radiology and urology literature. It is important to note there are other things besides cancer that can cause a low ADC, for example infection or inflammation.

### More accurate scoring

The best part about MRI-guided biopsy is we are able to aim at a target within a target; in other words, if a lesion has one particular area that looks most suspicious, we can take aim at that part of the tumor with pinpoint precision. The benefit is more accurate Gleason scoring and better tissue-based genomics. If a random biopsy is performed, there can be misclassification of disease, especially if the tumor is far toward the front of the prostate gland, which can be missed with TRUS biopsy.

### High accuracy, very low infection rate

For the patient, the procedure is very straightforward. He lies on the MRI scan table on his stomach. A needle guide smaller than an adult's index finger is inserted into the rectum. The needle guide functions two ways: it is both a receptacle for instruments to be inserted and it functions as a fiducial marker. Our specialized computer software allows us to see the needle guide and its relationship to the target area. The software gives us coordinates that allow us to aim at the area of interest with a high degree of accuracy. We can angle left, right, front, back and insert or retract the device to aim squarely at the target. Once the needle has been deployed the technologist takes an image of it in the fired position. We have our pathologist include this image in our report so the location of the tissue is indisputable. The procedure takes only about a half hour and does not require anesthesia. Numbing gel is used to ease any possible discomfort and patients tolerate the procedure extremely well. There is also an extremely low risk of infection of 0.6 percent. We presented this finding at the annual American Urological Association meeting in San Francisco in 2018.



Technology and research have helped advance diagnosis and treatment of prostate health.

Another important role of MRI is its use by urologists who adopt high-tech MRI/ultrasound fusion biopsy. This targeted technique is performed in-office by the urologist using ultrasound imaging in real-time overlapped onto MRI images obtained previously. This technique has the benefit of targeting the biopsy and taking additional core biopsies if indicated.

Another important role of MRI is its use by urologists who adopt high-tech MRI/ultrasound fusion biopsy. This targeted technique is performed in-office by the urologist using ultrasound imaging in real-time overlapped onto MRI images obtained previously. This technique has the benefit of targeting the biopsy and taking additional core biopsies if indicated.

### Genomic testing valuable for assessing metastatic risk

Once the biopsy specimens are collected, they are sent to a specialized laboratory for the pathologist to evaluate them and generate a report of findings. Our pathologist is specifically trained in prostate cancer evaluation. In many cases we send the specimens to another laboratory for genomic testing. This test looks at 22 genes known to be associated with prostate cancer. The report will designate the patient as low, intermediate or high risk as it relates to potential for metastasis or spread of cancer outside the prostate gland to lymph nodes or skeletal structures. This information can be a valuable piece of a complicated jigsaw puzzle.

### Better PSA density measurement

Another important piece of the puzzle is PSA density. This is the patient's PSA divided by their prostate gland volume. This prognostic indicator combined with imaging findings and genomics can be very helpful. For example, if one man has a prostate the size of an apricot and another man has a prostate the size of a grapefruit and they both possess a PSA level of 4 ng/mL, the one with the smaller gland will have a higher PSA density than the man with the larger gland. MRI allows us to measure the prostate gland in order to accurately calculate PSA density.

### New MRI-first guidelines adopted in US

The functional MRI sequences also allow us to monitor response to treatment over time so we can tell if a patient is responding well to whichever therapy they choose. Even if they are on active surveillance also called watchful waiting, the MRI allows us to monitor the patient and keep them safe. In the United Kingdom and the European Union, guidelines have been published mandating MRI prior to biopsy and recently the American Urological Association published their policy statement agreeing with those guidelines and implementing it in the United States. We tell our patients to never allow anyone to put a finger, a needle or a scalpel anywhere near your prostate gland unless they have done an MRI first.

Bernadette M. Greenwood is Chief Research Officer at Halo Diagnostics and a Clinical Instructor at UC Riverside School of Medicine. For more information about MRI-guided biopsy and tissue-based genomics, contact Halo Dx at (760) 776.8989 or visit [www.DesertMedicalImaging.com](http://www.DesertMedicalImaging.com).



## Bring Back the Physical Exam

*Rudimentary practice benefits patients the most*

By Eric Sickinger, DO

From the very start of medical school, the importance of a thorough physical exam is ingrained in students. Every year, and in every specialty, students are tested on how to perform a thorough exam. As such a basic and fundamental aspect of medicine, why does it so often get overlooked?

Some of the reasons include management pressures to see more patients in a day, lower insurance reimbursements and advances in technology to give a diagnosis. However, skipping this rudimentary practice can easily result in preventable medical errors and lead to detrimental outcomes for health care providers and insurance companies, but of course most importantly, patients.

We all know time is extremely valuable. In most circumstances, the health care professional has limited time to get to the root of most patients' conditions. Coupled with the patient's details, a physical exam can help give the provider most of the information he or she needs to form an accurate treatment plan. Without a thorough exam, it can be extremely difficult to understand the patient's issues and treat them properly. This can lead to a domino effect of misdirected care and an increase in unnecessary tests, images or medication.



Dr. Sickinger exams a patient presenting with knee pain.

### Be your own advocate

A 2015 study by Dr. Abraham Verghese, et. al., investigating the various consequences of physical exam oversights, found that the "consequence of the physical examination inadequacy included missed or delayed diagnosis in 76 percent of cases, incorrect diagnosis in 27 percent, unnecessary treatment in 18 percent, no or delayed treatment in 42 percent, unnecessary diagnostic cost in 25 percent, unnecessary exposure to radiation or contrast in 17 percent and complications caused by treatments in 4 percent."

All too often patients fall victim to the inefficiency of today's medical system. Exams can lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment leading to faster recoveries and much better outcomes. So, be sure to discuss the need for a physical exam with your provider.

### Exams lower health care costs

All providers in the health care community should be thinking holistically to deliver excellent patient care at the lowest and most effective cost, which in turn allows a wider application of affordable and exceptional health care. Failing to do a thorough exam doesn't only have negative consequences to the patient and doctor, but also to insurance companies.

The main objective for an insurance company is to deliver the best care for the lowest cost; a physical exam goes a long way toward delivering this result. Insurance companies are pushing back

for inappropriate imaging and testing, which costs millions of dollars each year across the U.S. They have good reason for tightening their regulations as medical practitioners have become overly reliant on imaging, tests, and referrals to point them to the correct diagnosis.

### Doctors take note

It can be easy to overlook the fundamental principles of any practice, but in medicine, it's imperative to remember the basics. Oftentimes, the answer providers are looking for can be found with a thorough physical exam. Without it, there may be unfavorable repercussions for the health care provider, insurance companies, and of course, the patient, at much greater expense to the healthcare industry as a whole. Focusing on the rudiments is part of what makes a great doctor great.

Dr. Sickinger is owner and physician at Advanced Center for Sports & Musculoskeletal Medicine which offers both in-office and telemedicine appointments (during this time). For more information, contact their Palm Desert office at (760) 636.1067 or the San Clemente office at (949) 388.1060, or visit [www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com](http://www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com).

Reference: 1) Verghese, A, Charlton B, Kassirer JP, Ramsey M, Ioannidis JP. Inadequacies of Physical Examination as a Cause of Medical Errors and Adverse Events: A Collection of Vignettes. The American Journal of Medicine. 2015;128(12).

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## Are Your Eyes Feeling Your Stress?

By Jennifer I. Hui, MD

Our eyes are truly the windows to our souls. They also give important clues and are general indicators of our overall wellness. With many of us feeling stress at this time, it is important to note that even our eyes can be affected.

During stressful times, you may notice familiar symptoms with increasing frequency, or perhaps new findings all together. Stress leads to heightened awareness, increased sensitivity to triggers, and may cause poor sleep, concentration and irritability. Any one of these factors or combination may cause eye symptoms.

Blurry vision is a concerning issue that may arise with stress. With sustained increased adrenaline, the pupils may be more dilated, which, in turn, affects our ability to focus. Vague feelings of visual non-clarity may plague you at various times of the day. You may find yourself blinking more often or feeling the need to wash your eyes out (or use drops) to try and clear your vision. You may also experience burning and/or itching as well as the urge to rub your eyes, but in this current pandemic, we must be very mindful to avoid touching our faces, noses, mouths - and especially our eyes - to reduce the risk of infection.

At times, you may note dryness or perhaps episodic tearing. Dryness may be exacerbated by poor sleep or lack of sleep and perhaps increased use of TVs or computers. Screen time of any sort decreases our natural blink rate, which worsens dryness. Your body may reflexively make more tears to try to compensate for this dryness, but the tearing also naturally leads to the urge to rub the eyes.

Another interesting phenomenon is the periodic, random twitching of an eyelid called myokymia. Myokymia is a benign condition that is often triggered by stress, lack of sleep and excessive caffeine intake (which may be tempting if you did not get a good night's sleep). The twitching which comes and goes may last only for a few minutes or even hours. It is usually unilateral and typically affects just one of your four eyelids. While it may be quite bothersome to the sufferer, it is most often unnoticeable to observers. Myokymia is almost always self-limited and you may go years between bouts.

It is helpful to realize and remember that ocular symptoms should improve with time. Self-care is not only important for our mental well-being, but for the health of our eyes as well. Take time for your preferred method of relaxation and try to sleep and rest whenever it is convenient or your body tells you.

For symptomatic relief of burning or itching, over-the-counter artificial tears may be soothing. Placing the drops in the refrigerator can make them feel even more refreshing. However, it is important to avoid drops that are formulated for "red eyes" as prolonged use of these drops often leads to worsened, rebound redness.

If you are reluctant to venture out to purchase drops, many people find relief with eye compresses which may be warm (warm tap water) or cool (rinse a wash cloth in ice water or cool it in the refrigerator). There is no correct temperature, just listen to your eyes!

*Dr. Hui is the founder of The Eyelid Institute in Palm Desert. She is a board-certified ophthalmologist and oculoplastic surgeon with a special interest in helping patients with eyelid, lacrimal and orbital conditions. She can be reached at (760) 610.2677.*

## Harness Your Thoughts to Fortify Your Immune System

By Roger Moore, CHt

Now more than ever, we all need to protect our health. You have a powerful force within you that can support your wellness: your unconscious mind. Besides strengthening your immune system, your subconscious mind can fight off disease; it controls all the vital processes of your body and it knows how to heal you.

In addition to healthy eating, exercise, staying hydrated and getting adequate sleep, you can boost your immune system by being calm and relaxed and engaging in activities that sustain hope and joy. And self-hypnosis is a proven way to direct your thoughts in support of your body's ability to heal and keep you healthy.

Of course, the opposite is also true - your thoughts can have a negative impact on your health:

- If you are bathing in scare-mongering news, you are depleting your immune system.
- If you are stuck in fear and anxiety, you are depleting your immune system.
- If you are perpetually worrying about yourself and your loved ones, you are depleting your immune system.

Sadly, negative thoughts are highly contagious at any time. Just think how a gloomy person entering a room can drag the whole group down. Or how you can actually sense the tension in a space where people have been arguing. The best thing you can do for yourself now, is turn away from negativity in all its forms and learn new techniques of self-care for your mind. Then go soak up some spring sun and fresh air.

Your thoughts literally change your brain, cells and genes. We know that just thinking about something can cause your brain to release neurotransmitters, chemical messengers that allow your body to communicate with parts of itself and your nervous system. They control virtually all of your body's functions, from producing hormones to digestion to feeling happy, sad, or stressed. This means your body is constantly physically reacting - actually changing - in response to the thoughts that run through your mind.

Even in this time of uncertainty, you still have a choice. You can activate your sympathetic nervous system (the fight or flight mode) and choose anxiety, fear, anger or any other upsetting emotion that can weaken your immune system. Or you can choose to live in the balanced state of your parasympathetic nervous system acknowledging the realities of the moment, breathe, be calm and take responsible action to enhance your immunity.

Hypnosis, which is something you can learn to do at home on your own, is known to buffer the effects of stress and upregulate immune function. *The Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* states that hypnosis may potentially be able to alter immune responses in order to influence the underlying biochemical factors of physical diseases.<sup>1</sup>

Right now, it's even more imperative that you are in control of your thoughts and emotions. Self-hypnosis can help you to do that by getting you out of the trance of fear and anxiety and getting you into a balanced state of health and well-being.

*Roger Moore is a certified counselor and registered hypnotherapist with Palm Desert Hypnosis and author of Becoming Slender For Life. He can be reached at [Roger@HypnosisHealthInfo.com](mailto:Roger@HypnosisHealthInfo.com) or 760.219.8079. [www.PalmDesertHypnosis.com](http://www.PalmDesertHypnosis.com)*

Reference: 1) Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, November 2005, Vol 33 No 2, Page 140 - 159.





## Keeping Up with Your Oral Health?

By Nick Baumann, DDS

With COVID-19 playing a major role in all our lives today, many of us have started to look more closely at our bodies, our immune systems and what we can do to keep ourselves healthier.

It may surprise you to learn that your mouth plays a major role in the strength of your immune system, and since trips to the dentist may be limited at this time, impeccable home care is critically important.

As the first line of defense against many pathogens, from what we digest to particles in the air, a healthy oral cavity can be vital in keeping the rest of your body in its best shape. Millions of bacteria are present in the oral cavity, some good, some bad. When there are large amounts of bad bacteria in the mouth due to poor oral hygiene, our defense system can see this as an infection and release resources to try to eliminate it. This can put a strain on the immune system and take away from the body's ability to adequately respond to other stressors; a constantly stressed immune system leads to more sickness overall.

Research has shown that poor oral health can have deleterious effects on other parts of the body besides the mouth, including the heart, lungs and gastrointestinal system - all good reasons to focus closely on oral hygiene and diet if we want to be healthy.

### Start with hydration

One of the vital players in keeping a healthy mouth is our saliva. There are many enzymes and antibodies present in the saliva that help to repel and kill bacteria. A lack of saliva dampens our ability to fight off these bacteria. Medical conditions and medications can decrease the amount of saliva in the mouth, leading to more opportunity for bacteria to replicate. Staying well hydrated and keeping the mouth moist is very important to oral health.

### Immunity may affect cavities

Further reinforcing the importance of oral care, new research has shown that our immune system may play a previously unforeseen role in our susceptibility to cavities. One study discovered that neutrophils, a type of immune cell our body sends out in response to an infection, may lead to more breakdown of our teeth and fillings.<sup>1</sup> Everyone's immune system and response is different, but the study suggests that a strong immune response, which could result from excessive bacteria in the mouth, may have a negative effect in that our own body's cells attack our teeth and fillings leading to more cavities.

It could be suggested then that having good oral health could decrease the immune response in the oral cavity possibly helping to prevent decay. More research needs to be done, but the study brought up an interesting mechanism about how our immune system can affect cavities.

Until your dental checkups resume, be sure you are correctly brushing, flossing and using a mouth rinse to maximize your oral health. Doing only one or two of these things gives more opportunity for bacteria to thrive. So, we all need to focus on integrating all three into our routine to further help us all be happy and healthy.

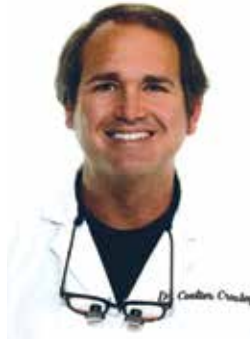
Dr. Nick is with Palm Desert Smiles and can be reached at (760) 568.3602.

Reference: 1) Acta Biomaterialia, Volume 88, 1 April 2019, Pages 325-331: Human neutrophils degrade methacrylate resin composites and tooth dentin

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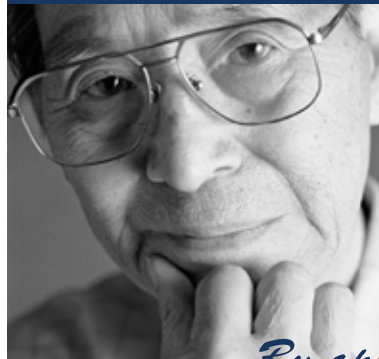
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# Living Wellness

with Jennifer Di Francesco



## Art to Honor Mother Earth and Change

Since the beginning of 2020, many of us have felt the symbiotic balance between humanity and Earth as more fragile than ever. The moment a highly contagious virus took the hurried pace of our lives and slowed it down, we started to pay attention. When our nomadic ancestors migrated with the seasons, animals, and weather patterns, they discerned messages from the land. The COVID-19 virus is a message from Mother Nature. Our ability to harness this innate sense to notice the subtleties the earth is communicating allows us to live in synchronicity.



Art created by Mo Zakhireh, MD using Earth's simple treasures

One way we can ground ourselves to Earth and feel a sense of admiration is by creating an altar. Everything we witness in nature has remarkable texture, color, shape and nuance. By transporting ourselves to a place of childlike wonder and carving out time to explore, we will find treasures. Below are the steps to create a living work of art.

**Step 1: Roam with curiosity.** Go to the park or find a space in your backyard where you can slow down and pay attention to nature's palette. A rose bush might have dropped some petals on the ground or a single blade of grass might hold intrigue. As you roam, equipped with a basket or bag, select gifts from Earth with care. The idea is to collect from the ground,

but there might be isolated times when cutting a leaf will complement the items you procured from droppings.

**Step 2: Create a canvas.** Find an open space where there is room to clear the ground of debris using a brush or your hand. Lay out all your findings and separate them in groupings.

**Step 3: Create your work of art.** Next, display your treasures in an artistic arrangement. This is similar to the act of creating a mandala which is an impermanent sacred space upheld in the Buddhist culture. Remember, "nature never hurries and everything gets accomplished." So, take your time during this meditation in motion.

**Step 4: Step back, share and say goodbye.** Honor what you have created; take a picture to share with another and then walk away knowing that at any moment a wind or the stirrings of the world will wipe away the beauty you created. This experience cultivates the quality to embrace change.

During social isolation, a fellow co-worker and I have shared our creations weekly. This experience brought beauty to my day and joined us together. John Muir said, "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."

This practice of designing Earth altars creates the conditions for communion with nature.



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## Becoming Aware of Your Inner Critic

By Dipika Patel

Throughout my years as a professional coach, I have worked with men and women helping them to identify what is holding them back from their desired outcomes. Clients come to me seeking better health and better relationships with themselves and others. What I often discover is that many have not recognized and dealt with their own inner critic, which results in the return of undesired outcomes.

I truly believe good intentions can go a long way; however, if you are not aware of your subconscious thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions (we can even say inactions as that is still a choice), there is a cause and effect. And the effect can be detrimental to your own well-being.

Identifying that inner critic can help you gain clarity, confidence and self-esteem which in return can create a healthier relationship with your physical body and help to relieve both physical and mental/emotional health issues. Owning your inner critic will also enhance your relationships with others, by taking responsibility of your own thoughts, and allowing you to become vulnerable with the right people in your life.

Health encompasses the mind, body and soul. It is a fine balance of being able to integrate lifestyle choices. You can't have one without the others, because each part affects the other aspects of your life.

Are you that nice person who is constantly getting walked over while your inner critic is telling you that you don't deserve better or more? Do you feel you lack the courage to get what you want? Or do you live life to the other extreme? Are you that mean person whose inner critic projects outwardly? You try to do your best; however, you have trouble controlling your negative critic which you can't seem to contain. You criticize everything and everyone around you, especially those who love you because you do not feel loveable.

These thoughts and behavioral patterns can change through self-awareness.

Personal awareness is key to moving forward and making healthy choices for your higher good. Sometimes that means dealing with the thing or things you fear most and perhaps have avoided most of your life. If your inner critic is active and you give those thoughts the right of way, they can take over and lead the way and everything else will become priority apart from you.

Many of us don't even realize its presence. Catch yourself the next time you're feeling anxious, distracted or numb. Remember, the inner critic is good at making you feel like you are in control. The truth is you are not.

I invite you to make a personal check list:

1. Identify that inner critic's voice and write down your thoughts.
2. Find compassion and forgiveness within yourself and write about that.
3. Make a list of ways you can show more kindness to yourself.
4. Take action that represents your own point of view.

Dipika Patel is a certified holistic health coach and lifestyle practitioner who empowers her professional clients to activate an overall balanced lifestyle of mind, body and soul. Her inaugural book, Own Your Inner Bitch So She Can't Own You, will be released this month and available at Amazon.com. Dipika can be reached at (760) 821.3119 or [www.LoveYourLifeHealthy.com](http://www.LoveYourLifeHealthy.com).



## How to Avoid the Quarantine-15 and Sidestep Stress During Uncertain Times

By Jay Nixon

Surely, you've heard of the Freshman Fifteen. Now the term 'Quarantine Fifteen' has been coined for the weight one may gain during the COVID-19 pandemic while staying cooped up inside without much to do except, well, eat. While gyms and group fitness classes have been closed or canceled for the foreseeable future, there's no reason you have to add an extra 15 pounds to your post-coronavirus weigh in.

From work, appointments, gym time and everything in between, our pre-coronavirus life has been drastically modified. You may be struggling with getting into new routines because naturally, we crave routine and structure. Although we do not have assurance or control, we cannot freeze in fear and do nothing. We must find ways to adapt and continue with the things that are important to us.

Fear shifts our mindset into survival mode, which can make us hoard things like toilet paper and food, but also hold onto negative thoughts and behaviors...even weight!

In uncertain times, our brains form a fight or flight response in an effort to survive. The coronavirus is very real and there is undoubtedly danger, thus, the brain creates these same fight or flight emergent responses, but there's no fight to fight or reason to flee. These reactions tighten our muscles, flood our bloodstreams with cortisol, and lead to more fear – causing stress and creating adrenaline that our bodies can't release.

One of the best ways to manage stress and create structure in uncertain times is by making a commitment to move your body and get blood pumping. You can move it regardless of where you are and without any equipment! Study after study has shown the enormous benefits of movement, but there may be a few of which you are not aware.

**Exercise makes you happier.** Exercise improves your mood and decreases feelings of stress, anxiety and depression by releasing endorphins, known as happy hormones. Movement activates the parts of the brain that regulate anxiety and overwhelm and has shown to increase brain sensitivity to the hormones norepinephrine and serotonin which relieve feelings of stress.

**Exercise supports your immune system.** Exercise enhances immune function by improving your overall blood circulation. The heart gets a work out by increasing blood flow, pumping immune cells and infection-fighting cells throughout the body. According to a recent analysis published in the *International Journal of Exercise Immunology Review*, engaging in as little as 30 minutes of moderate daily exercise helps stimulate your immune system.

**Take an online class.** It's no secret that studios and gyms offer a form of community; they foster camaraderie and friendly competition. If they remain closed, it doesn't mean you have to go at it alone. Many gyms and fitness studios are now offering online classes. Indeed, there has never been an easier time to work out. You can roll out of bed and exercise even before you brush your teeth – and no one will know the difference! You can wear your favorite '80s hairband shirt and a pair of old sneakers. And, the best part? There's no pressure if you don't know all the moves because it's just you and the screen. There's never been a better time to use technology to your advantage.

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**Participate in a fitness challenge.** As a personal trainer and fitness professional, I decided to create a fitness challenge for my clients so they can stay connected, motivated, and accountable. We also encouraged them to invite family and friends. The added and sometimes overlooked benefit of a virtual workout buddy (or buddies) is it keeps everyone on track, consistently showing up and moving toward their fitness goals. I encourage you to reach out to your own circles and form or join a fitness challenge. Here is an example of what a challenge could look like:

Each day a list of activities is created. Each person in the challenge must complete all tasks to earn the daily checkmark.

- Walk for 15-30 minutes
- Complete an online workout based on your fitness level (Don't forget to share good ones!)
- Gratitude share: Tell the group three things for which you are grateful.

You can use Facetime or Zoom to connect, or you could use a Google doc to track everyone's progress like a scoreboard. Whatever platform you choose, make sure you give everyone virtual high fives of encouragement for their efforts in staving off the Quarantine Fifteen and choosing to fight back on the stress hormones.

Jay Nixon is the owner of Thrive Fitness Studio in Palm Desert and author of two best-selling books: *The Overweight Mind - The Undeniable Truth Behind Why You're Not Losing Weight* and *The Purpose of Pain - How to Turn Tragedy into Triumph Because Life's Not Supposed to Suck!*, both available on Amazon.com. Jay can be reached at [www.ThriveForeverFit.com](http://www.ThriveForeverFit.com) or (760) 913.7424.

## One Breath at a Time

By Jayne Robertson, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

Overwhelmed. Anxious. Freaked out. Scared. Desperate.

These are some of the words that seem to be describing our current global mood. Places have shut down everywhere, people are being told not to travel, to stay at home, to head back to their home countries, to work from home, to stay six feet away from one another, to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds and, for goodness sake, sneeze into your elbow! The world and all its economies have come to a life-altering, screeching halt. It's no wonder the above words are all so appropriate.



In a state of uncertainty, simply breathing can de-escalate anxiety.

As I was contemplating closing the physical space of my yoga studio, this decision weighed on me as the stress was beginning to show up in my own life. It tore at me because so many students had been expressing how supportive their yoga practice is for them and coming into community is an integral part of maintaining vitality. If I closed the doors...then what? So, opening a virtual yoga studio seemed like the best option and, in under 48 hours, I moved my entire business online.

As I was puzzling out how to make the switch from in-person to online, I found my mind tick, tick, ticking along. And when I noticed it began to impact my ability to fall asleep, I turned to something I knew would support me...my practice.

One of the strongest reasons we come to the mat on a regular basis is to build resiliency for when life throws us the unexpected. Having a yoga practice allows us to build a foundation of finding our breath, our center, to calm us, to notice our physical and emotional experience and awaken our consciousness to what serves us in that particular moment.

Yes, the learning curve was steep, but it's worked, and I'm now connecting to more people around the country (and world!) than I had previously. People are beyond grateful for the opportunity to say "G'day" to each other at the beginning of practice and to see familiar faces online in a most unfamiliar way.

A practice we've been undertaking is to focus on one breath at a time. In a state of not-knowing, conflict or confusion, we tend to spiral upward into a state of greater anxiety. Coming back to the simplicity of one breath at a time can de-escalate the spiral.

Try this out. Sit or lay down in a comfortable position. As you begin to follow your breath, notice what thought is present at the top of the inhale when your lungs are full. On the exhale breath, visualize pushing that thought along, as though it's on a conveyor belt and you're choosing not to pick it up. Repeat. You may notice each inhale has a different thought. Push whatever thought it may be, desirable or undesirable, along with the exhale breath.

So, when you notice being overwhelmed, anxious, freaked out, scared or desperate... come back to this breathing exercise. One breath at a time.

Jayne Robertson is owner and instructor at Desert Yoga Therapy. For more information, visit [www.desertyogatherapy.com](http://www.desertyogatherapy.com), call (760) 456.5160 or email [jayne@desertyogatherapy.com](mailto:jayne@desertyogatherapy.com).

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## Staying Healthy at Home

By Jessica Needle, ND

The forced slow down we're experiencing has likely made you look for ways to be productive regarding your job, household projects and hobbies, but you may not have thought about treating your health in the same way. Below are some tips to inspire you to use this downtime to improve your diet and sleeping habits while lowering your stress.

**Practice mindful eating.** If you've been binge eating and gaining "quarantine pounds," try engaging in mindful eating practices. These include beginning each meal with deep breaths and contemplation, unplugging from distractions and perhaps eating in silence, chewing thoroughly and putting your utensils down between mouthfuls to slow down your rate of consumption. These actions will allow you to enter the parasympathetic state, where your nervous system is relaxed and digestion is fostered.

**Eat two complete meals daily.** Eat two full meals a day instead of snacking frequently throughout the day. When you eat a complete meal, you'll be filled up and your body will obtain the nutrients it needs to stave off cravings. Include at least two servings of vegetables in each meal to provide minerals, which are especially useful in cutting down cravings and resultant overeating.

**Resist temptation foods and beverages by not buying them.** If there's a food or beverage in your diet you find hard to resist at a restaurant, make a commitment to eliminate this food in your home. Bread, desserts and alcohol contain refined carbohydrates that supply excess calories and suppress your immune system. The effect lasts for several hours after consumption, so if you're snacking on these foods several times a day, your immune system is functioning at a disadvantage and you're more likely to get sick. If it seems daunting to go without comfort food altogether, try it for a few days as a way to ease into a new pattern.

**Reduce or wean off caffeine altogether.** You also can use this time to wean off caffeine if you drink more than one cup of coffee per day. People use coffee to perk themselves up, often during the afternoon slump in energy. While coffee may help you feel more alert and perform better in the short run, long-term consequences include gas, bloating and acid reflux, along with an increased risk of osteoporosis. You may be leery of going without coffee due to withdrawal headaches or fatigue, but with less on your plate, you can rest when tired instead of using a stimulant to power through one more activity.

**Develop good sleep hygiene.** Speaking of rest, be sure to stick to a regular bedtime. It can be tempting to stay up late watching movies or TV, but your body functions better when you adhere to a routine. If you deprive yourself of nighttime sleep, your body will not produce adequate melatonin, and studies show that melatonin may lessen symptoms of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> Looking at a computer screen late in the evening also suppresses melatonin. Turn off your electronics and try engaging in meditation before bed instead. Meditation improves sleep, lowers anxiety, depression and increases compassion and gratitude. We all can benefit from these effects to move more easily through the ever-changing conditions of this time.

*Dr. Needle is a licensed naturopathic doctor with Optimal Health Center in Palm Desert. She can be reached at (760) 568.2598 or www.OptimalHealthPD.com.*

Reference: 1) Rui Zhang et al. COVID-19: Melatonin as a potential adjuvant treatment. Life Sciences. Volume 250, June 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lfs.2020.117583>

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## Yoga, Cancer and Your Immune System

When you hear the three words "you have cancer," your world just stops. You go into shock. You can only hear the pounding of your heart fearfully beating within your chest. It is that moment your body goes numb and your world turns upside down. The joy of everyday life is sucked out of your soul until you hear the beautiful words, "you are cancer free; there is no evidence of disease."

So how does one build up their immunity, their stamina, their strength after going through chemotherapy and radiation treatments? You might ask yourself, how can I help my body now adapt to lingering side effects of treatments and help reduce cancer recurrence?

We all should know by now that getting enough sleep, eating a proper diet and exercising all play a role in how our immune system functions and heals. Having healthy habits prior to cancer also can affect how well your treatments go. We also should know that stress reduction is a vital part of healing during and/or after cancer treatment. It is a hard one to grasp when you are constantly dealing with doctor visits, insurance claims and possible loss in wages if you had to take time off from work. With a high stress level, your immune system is suppressed and reduces the body's ability to heal.

So, how do you help your stress level? Why not try yoga or meditation? First, ask your hospital or doctor's office if they have cancer-specific exercises classes, yoga, or stress-reduction classes. Many cancer centers now offer stress reduction therapies prescribed along with traditional cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation. Keeping stress low, in turn, helps your immune system stay strong and functioning well.

Doing a low-impact form of movement like yoga not only can help you feel good, but it can build bone density and help your bones stay strong. It also can help keep your lymphatic and digestive systems functioning properly. An added benefit, it raises serotonin levels to keep you happy and mentally strong without having to do strenuous activity. Yoga for cancer also gives you a chance to connect with your thoughts. As you work through the gentle movements, you, in turn, are able to work through your fears and anxieties among a community of others who understand the same journey on which you are traveling.

Yoga breathing also allows you to connect with the natural state of "just being" which can help you simply let go - an important factor when faced with the cancer journey.

*Shay Moraga, E-RYT500, is a triple negative breast cancer survivor and teaches Yoga for Cancer Survivors locally at Eisenhower's Lucy Curci Cancer Center. She is also founder of the non-profit Shay's Warriors - Life After Cancer and can be reached at shay@namamstewithshay.com. For more information, visit www.shayswarriors.org or reach out on social media @Shay'sWarriors.*



## Laughing in the Face of Uncertainty

By Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos

You may have heard the saying, "Laugh till it heals." Current research agrees; laughter is considered a form of medicine. And it is a sharp gift that can cut through fear.

During these stressful times of facing a buggy-man named COVID-19, it may be time to use this gift as a blessed weapon because laughter is contagious, too. You may be thinking, "What? Laugh at a time like this? Is she nuts?" Please allow me to share a story and present research to validate my statement.

In the echoes of my mind sits a British woman named Petronelle who lived on Cape Cod. Pete, as she preferred to be called, mentored me during my battles with breast cancer and the writing of my first book. Petronelle's numerous novels of espionage, romantic suspense, and mysteries were published worldwide. If not plotting a murder, she could be found sitting on her blue recliner watching TV and laughing at the nightly news.

Petronelle's joy was addictive. If I felt frightened, I phoned her to get a "hit of Pete." The worse the situation, the louder she laughed. At first, I found this behavior quite alarming and questioned her state of mind. However, over time, I realized it made any crisis seem less dire, even a life or death situation. In my case it was cancer. In her case, it was her eyesight. "Yes, the doctor told me I'm going blind," she laughed. Wiggling her fingers as she continued, "So, I'm learning braille because although my eyes may fail me, my fingers still work." Then she belly-laughed while rocking in the chair. There was something about crisis delivered with a British accent followed by howling laughter that made everything seem better. "Eventually, we are all going to die," she chuckled, "so, it really doesn't matter, Dear, does it?"

Petronelle had a point. The truth made me giggle. She conquered fear from the higher vibration of joy and laughter. I loved her for it because she always made me feel so good about myself by making me feel good about the outcome of any situation. I felt invincible.

Leading by example, her giggles taught me to laugh in the face of fear. So, while I went through breast cancer, recurrence, surgeries, treatments and tests, I followed in Petronelle's footsteps and laughed as often as possible, about anything, or nothing. At times my husband wondered about my mental state.

Delivering catastrophic news via laughter chased Petronelle's blindness (British) "bogyman" and my cancer boogeyman away. Fear cannot live in a laughter-filled environment. I decided to research why the power of laughter worked and found that something amazing happens to our mind, body and soul when we laugh.

According to current research, laughter creates scientifically measurable positive change. It is also an excellent treatment for relieving stress and research shows stress is a killer. Forbes magazine explained how laughter has an anti-inflammatory effect that protects blood vessels and heart muscles from the damaging effects of cardiovascular disease.<sup>1</sup> Regular, hearty laughter should probably be part of every heart disease prevention program. And, according to the *Journal of Neuroscience*, laughter is a potent releaser of endorphins, our natural, feel-good chemicals.<sup>2</sup>

The endorphin effect also explains why social laughter is so contagious. Laughter



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contagiously forms social bonds. When an endorphin release spreads through groups, it promotes a sense of togetherness and safety. Each person in the social unit becomes a transmitter of good feelings to others via laughter. It explains why when someone starts laughing, others laugh, even if they are not sure why everyone is laughing. The reason is not as important as the good feeling of belonging.

At first, the concept of laughing in the face of fear felt forced to me. But, over time, it replaced my old behavior of becoming anxious. When necessary, "fake it till you make it." Allow laughter to become the new habit that naturally enhances focus for problem-solving. It is easier to see a solution when fear is removed from the equation.

Petronelle died with her eyesight. I still miss her, but her laughter lives in the echoes of my mind. Despite the odds of surviving cancer three times, I stand in the protection of my Higher Power during challenging times, and laugh.

"Laugh at fear and uncertainty? Impossible!," you may say. Try it. You might discover your new happy-pill.

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos of *Rancho Mirage* is a survivor, author, dream expert, speaker, TV/radio host/producer and has been featured on *Dr. Oz* and *The Doctors*. For more visit [www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com](http://www.KathleenOkeefeKanavos.com).

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## Learning from Those Preceding Us

### China's Eastern and Western COVID-19 therapies

By Diane Sheppard, PhD, LAc

While many look negatively at China and their cause and effect of COVID-19, there is much we can learn from their actions, insights and use of both Eastern and Western medicine.

One of my teachers, John Chen PhD, OMD, is a pharmacist and fifth-generation Chinese medicine doctor who graduated from USC. He explained that China has been dealing with large-scale viral epidemics for over 2,000 years with as many as 320 documented. During this current pandemic, he is speaking directly with doctors in Wuhan (the epicenter) and Hei Bu provinces about how they are integrating traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) with Western medicine.

**China's initial strategy.** Dr. Chen shared that when Wuhan was in lockdown starting on January 29, the Chinese equivalent of our FDA, the Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China (PPRC), announced a "major strategy," stating all people with or without COVID-19 were to take Chinese herb decoctions (liquid) or granule form before midnight on February 23. In a city of 60,000, diagnosis of all was challenging; so, the government paid for pharmacies in each province to make their own herbal decoctions and deliver them door to door. Designated medical institutions were to ensure all infected patients complied and that others took the preventive formula.

The Chinese government also implemented draconian measures by taking everyone's body temperature (again, going door to door) then confirming cases with CT scans, nucleic acid tests and CBC blood tests. Approximately 40,000 doctors were brought in to help. The main deficiencies for which they were looking were lymphopenia, which was seen in 80 percent of hospital patients, thrombocytopenia (low platelet count), heart disease, diabetes and autoimmune

disorders - all which put patients at higher risk of mortality.

The government hospitals prescribed the anti-viral medications Remdesivir (used for Ebola), lopinavir and ritonavir (used for HIV) and chloroquine (an anti-malaria drug) to mitigate the spread of the disease even though preliminary studies had not yet shown evidence of effectiveness for slowing the progression of the virus.

Dr. Chen added, that in some cases steroids were used to reduce inflammation and suppress the immune system, but these medications can make patients more susceptible to secondary infections. Immunosuppressants also were used to calm the cytokine storm, but were found to cause more complications to the immune system. In many cases, the patients were put on ventilators and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) support.

As they have done for thousands of years in China, and are now doing in the US, doctors continue to successfully use antibodies from recovered patients to help others fight off viral infection.

**An integrative approach.** The use of both Eastern and Western therapies is common in China. One doctor, reporting live from Wuhan, said he works in a Western-based hospital that has a dedicated wing for traditional Chinese herbal therapies. Some consumers choose purely TCM clinics where herbal decoctions, acupuncture, moxibustion and cupping are used; however, what they have found is that this is only effective for prevention or in the early and recovery stages of the disease.

**Process of the disease.** The major source of Chinese herbal formulations is the clinical textbook *Shang Han Lun Treatise on Cold Damage Diseases* and

*Continued on page 17*

## Manual Lymphatic Drainage Therapy

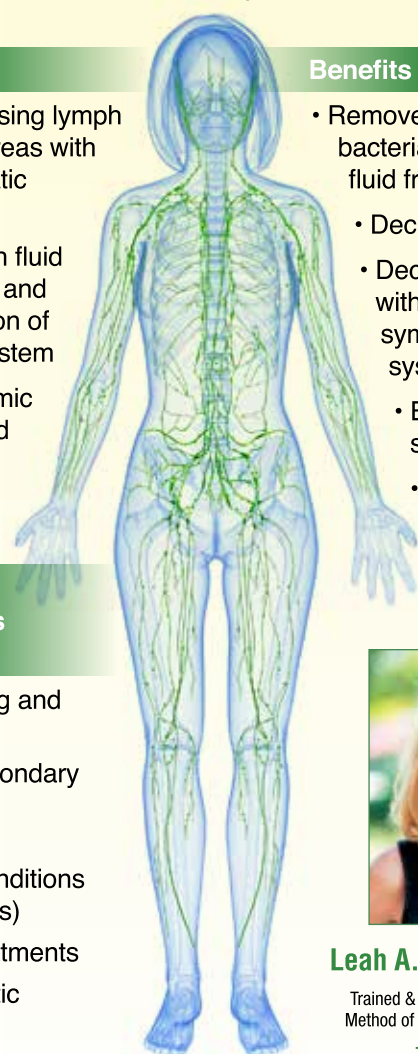
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## Supporting Our Warrior White Blood Cells

By Amanda Beckner, CN, HHP, PhD

While white blood cells (WBC) account for only one percent of our blood, they have an enormous impact on our entire system and protect the body from illness and disease. Moving within our bloodstream, they work with our immune system as little warriors constantly doing battle to fight infections, bacteria and other foreign invaders.

Most white blood cells are made in our bone marrow and then stored in our blood and lymph tissues. Some only survive for days, so our bone marrow is constantly producing more.

Keeping our WBC count up is vital for maintaining good health and recovering when we become ill. Factors that can contribute to a drop in WBC counts include viral infection, autoimmune disorders, certain medications and antibiotics, chemotherapy and poor health in general. Fatigue, stress, poor nutrition and alcohol abuse are also contributors.

There are many lifestyle factors which help boost white blood cells including maintaining a healthy weight, eating a correct balanced diet, drinking plenty of quality water, getting solid sleep and minimizing stress.



Foods high in vitamin C and those with anti-inflammatory properties can help strengthen immunity.

To give your little warriors their greatest advantage, start by eliminating unhealthy saturated and trans fats along with simple sugars, and add more foods high in vitamin C and those with anti-inflammatory properties:

- Enjoy more of these vitamin-rich foods: kiwi, mango, papaya, red bell pepper, broccoli, spinach, farm-raised organic chicken (yes, there actually is something to chicken soup when you're sick!) and avocados.
- Spice up your meals with these anti-inflammatory seasonings: turmeric, garlic, ginger and raw honey.

- Snack on power boosting nuts and seeds like sunflower seeds, almonds and Brazil nuts

- Sip on green tea which is high in antioxidants and contains the healthy polyphenol EGCG and L-thiamine, a germ-fighting compound found in our T-cells. It also is reported that green tea contains catechins that may help kill influenza viruses.<sup>1</sup>

- Take supplements to support your system including a good probiotic daily, 10 mg of zinc, 2000 IU of vitamin D3, 250 mg olive leaf (can lower blood pressure), and a quality multi-vitamin.

In these uncertain times, it's understandable that many worry about catching the coronavirus. To minimize stress, it is important to remember that most people who get sick will recover. Those at greater risk include individuals with cancer, lung and heart disease and diabetes, especially type 1.

Continued on page 15



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## A Case for Vitamin C as Viable Treatment for COVID-19

By Sonja Fung, ND

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) has wide ranging actions on our body as an antioxidant, immunomodulator, co-factor for collagen and hormone production, and as a pro-oxidant burst in high doses.<sup>1</sup> Vitamin C is well established for its treatment of infections and has been shown to shorten the duration of the common cold as well as reducing symptoms of bacterial infections.<sup>2,3</sup> It also acts as a protectant for lung tissue function during viral illness, especially relevant to COVID-19 patients. Recently, intravenous (IV) vitamin C has shown benefit in reducing mortality from sepsis<sup>4,5</sup>, reducing oxidative stress in the critically ill<sup>6,7</sup> and reducing the duration of mechanical ventilator use and ICU hospital stays.<sup>8,9</sup>

The exciting news is currently there are positive reports of hospitals in Shanghai, Wuhan, South Korea, and New York using IV dosing of vitamin C to help critically-ill SARS-Covid-2 patients recover faster.<sup>10,11,12,26</sup> When vitamin C is infused, it bypasses the digestive system to allow for increased dose tolerance and peak serum concentrations at 350 mg/dL, 100 times greater than oral peak levels.<sup>13</sup> The Shanghai consensus states that doctors are infusing vitamin C at 100 mg/kg dosing over 24 hours, which is about

7,000 mg vitamin C for a 155-pound person; not a large dose by any stretch.<sup>10,11,13</sup>

Vitamin C is also relatively inexpensive when compared to other standard interventions. An average treatment would cost under \$25 per person per day.<sup>11</sup> With this encouraging news, several clinical trials around the world have started to continue to assess the efficacy of vitamin C as an adjunctive treatment option.<sup>14,15,16</sup>

Vitamin C is an essential vitamin that we cannot make on our own; thus, the need to replenish our levels frequently through food or other sources. The current recommended daily allowance in healthy adults is 2,000 mg.<sup>3</sup> However, vitamin C deficiency is common in critically-ill patients.<sup>17</sup> When our bodies are in a stressed state, such as when we are ill, it triggers an inflammatory response and more vitamin C is needed to modulate the oxidative damage.<sup>18,19</sup>

Dose tolerance for oral vitamin C depends on the individual and can vary between 100 mg to 10,000 mg due to the osmotic effect it has on the digestive system. Gastrointestinal cramping and loose stools are common complaints for high oral intake.<sup>3,17</sup> In my clinical experience, patients in the cancer arena<sup>20,21,22</sup> have had 25,000-100,000 mg of vitamin C safely infused over a four-hour time frame without any adverse effects.

Because vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin and readily used or eliminated in our body, it is difficult to build up toxic doses. Currently there is a high level of safety, no standard lethal dose of vitamin C for humans and no reported deaths from vitamin C toxicity,<sup>23,24</sup> despite what some news headlines say.<sup>25</sup> In some cases, doses of vitamin C over 10,000 mg could cause hemolytic anemia in those with a genetic mutation of the specific enzyme G6PD. So, medical professionals should test patients prior to initial infusion. This is done through a standard blood test. Patients with underlying kidney issues also need monitoring for higher doses.<sup>21,22</sup>

For patients with moderate to severe COVID-19, vitamin C is a safe, well-tolerated, efficacious and relatively inexpensive treatment protocol that all hospitals are capable of implementing as an adjunct to current in-hospital treatment protocols to reduce ventilator usage, ICU stays and infections.<sup>26,27</sup>

We should be encouraged by the data shared through the Shanghai consensus and the potential benefits for patients with moderate to severe COVID-19 symptoms utilizing IV vitamin C therapy.

Dr. Fung is a primary care naturopathic doctor at Live Well Clinic in La Quinta. She has a focus on integrative cancer care and PRP regenerative joint injections for pain and can be reached at (760) 771.5970. [www.livewellclinic.org](http://www.livewellclinic.org).

References available upon request: [Info@DesertHealthNews.com](mailto:Info@DesertHealthNews.com).



Vitamin C therapy is proving to be an efficacious and relatively inexpensive adjunct therapy for COVID-19.

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## Meditation for Mental Health

Over the past month, I have seen a surge of patients presenting with anxiety and/or depression in my practice. "I am so scared, scared to go out, scared to be home alone, scared of how I am going to pay my bills, and scared that my family members and friends could die in the next few weeks. I don't know what to do," said one patient recently.

Although this particular patient was feeling it all, everyone has probably experienced some variation of at least one of these thoughts over the past few weeks. In the context of what is going on right now with COVID-19, we call this situational anxiety and/or depression and expect most of it will dissipate once the pandemic passes. However, as we don't know how long that is going to be, it is especially important to educate and empower patients with knowledge about how stress can affect their long-term health and what they can do about it.

To put it simply, stress increases the number of inflammatory markers in our bloodstream which, in turn, decrease our immunity, making us more susceptible to infections, and putting us at higher risk of developing chronic disease states such as autoimmune conditions, dementia, diabetes and heart disease, to mention a few.

One of the most powerful things someone experiencing these thoughts can contemplate is how much their worry will change the outcome of that which they are worried about. In most cases, the answer is not at all.

I love to adapt the concept of Steven Covey's Circle of Influence from his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. I ask the patient to draw a circle about the size of a plum and then draw a circle around that about the size of a big salad plate. The small circle represents their circle of influence and in this area, they are to write the things they can change or influence by worrying about them. The space outside of the small circle and inside the big circle is where they write all the things they worry about that their worry can't change. This is a powerful visual exercise to help patients see there is very little they can control or change by worrying about it. This realization has helped many patients create a positive thought habit when they find themselves feeling overwhelmed with worry, and in turn, make a conscious decision to not worry.



A regular meditation practice can help create healthier thought patterns.

In addition to decreasing the time spent as a "worrywart," there are a few essential lifestyle habits that also help with anxiety and depression such as getting seven to nine hours of quality sleep, 15- to 30-minutes of daily exercise and eating a rainbow of fresh whole foods. But there is something more you can do, and it is very powerful. If you are my patient, you will not leave the office without learning about it...

Meditation. Not only has this practice shown to directly decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression, but it also has been shown in studies to reduce blood levels of inflammatory markers.

The best part is that it is very simple to incorporate. I recommend downloading a meditation app (there are many free ones) and starting a practice of meditating 5-minutes twice a day. Over time, you slowly work up to 15 to 30-minutes twice a day, usually upon waking and before bed.

Another fact that surprises patients is that for mild to moderate depression and anxiety, walking briskly for 30 minutes was found to be just as effective as commonly prescribed medications. So, adding a brisk walk and getting outside, whether it's in your yard or your neighborhood, also can help with the feelings of overwhelm.

Of course, some patients need anti-anxiolytic and antidepressant prescription medications and that is absolutely fine. Adding these other holistic modalities is not going to detract from the benefits of medication and will most likely work in synergy to produce a stronger sense of overall well-being.

Dr. Fayssoux is an integrative primary care practitioner with Ohm & Oot Wellness Medicine in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 469.9900. For more information visit [www.KinderFayssouxMD.com](http://www.KinderFayssouxMD.com).

### Supporting Our Warrior White Blood Cells

Continued from page 14

Symptoms of the virus range from mild to severe and could include fever over 100.5, cough, lethargy, nausea and or diarrhea. In more severe cases, shortness of breath, chest pain, cough and pneumonia will appear.

If you feel symptoms, increase your vitamin C to 5,000 mg (or tolerable amount) and your garlic intake, drink hot teas (green, immune and echinacea), hot broths and chicken soup (non-dairy), get plenty of rest, keep your chest warm and use a vapor rub at night to help keep your airways open.

Also avoid NSAIDS such as ibuprofen, aspirin, naproxen (Aleve) or any clotting drugs such as warfarin (Coumadin). Observational studies from China show that these types of drugs can make it worse. If you need to use a pain reliever, Tylenol for fever, aches and pains is recommended.

The most important way to protect your WBC warriors is to practice good hygiene. Keep yourself and your surroundings clean, wash your hands and keep things you touch often wiped down with disinfectant (including your phone), social distance (six feet or more) and, if you're sick in any way, stay home for your sake and those around you.

Dr. Beckner is owner of Your Body Code in Palm Desert which offers personalized nutrition and wellness programs. For more information, visit [www.yourbodycode.com](http://www.yourbodycode.com) or call (760) 341.BODY (2639).

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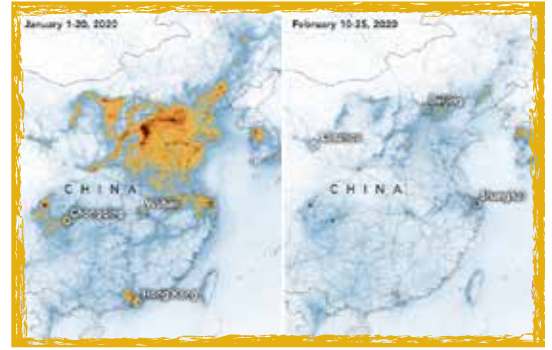
**Pause and Reflect**

**Animals emerge from the darkness**

Some of the most powerful images from around the world are animals descending on roads less traveled. Monkeys en masse in Thailand; uninhibited deer roaming the streets of Sri Lanka and Japan; peacocks displaying a cornucopia of color for residents of Madrid; rare orcas spotted in New Zealand bays; a pride of lions lounging on a road in South Africa; bears sauntering the streets of Arcadia, Calif.; goats gallivanting through the seaside town of Llandudno, Wales, and fish appearing in the clear blue canals of Venice.

"I am truly grateful for the opportunity this lockdown has given our animals," said Pam Salvadore of La Quinta. "Those creatures who have been displaced by humans are now free to roam. They are reclaiming their habitats and enjoying our planet. I only hope that we can better accommodate them when this is all over. It's their planet, too."

As we long for creature comforts, animal shelters everywhere are placing the large majority of their dogs and cats in loving homes. And possibly the best news, China has officially banned the trade and consumption of wildlife.<sup>5</sup> Reports state that the coronavirus outbreak may have started in a wild animal market in Wuhan where bats, snakes, civets and other animals were sold. Many in China join international conservation groups calling for the ban to be permanent.



Images show the air quality in China pre- and post-quarantine. (Source: NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens)

**Looking out for each other**

We have all witnessed the heartwarming acts of kindness and generosity that have come out of quarantine. It is beautiful to think that staying apart has brought us closer together and enhanced our compassion and empathy for one another.

From countries sharing much needed supplies to cities uniting in song and sound; from groups creating virtual ways to gather, to neighbors simply showing up, the movement to embrace "we are all in this together" has been extraordinary.



Polo Club members made sure all residents were covered.

To pay it forward, medical experts from China traveled to Italy with 30 tons of masks, respirators, and other supplies to help fight the fight they know all too well<sup>6</sup>. Here at home, donations received by local hospitals have been heartening.

"It's truly humbling to see what people are doing to come together and support our health care workers at all valley hospitals," says Eisenhower Health's Lee Rice. To help ease stress, the hospital distributed thank you notes to employees to deliver to co-workers who might not receive the accolades deserved. Internal medicine resident Eliane Coffler, MD also initiated a hospital-wide morning meditation featuring wellness experts from around the world.

At Trilogy at the Polo Club, a group of residents set a goal to ensure all in the community had access to masks. With donations of material and time, 120 volunteers made and delivered 727 masks. Monetary donations from grateful neighbors were given to The Rescue Mission and FIND Food Bank on behalf of the community.

"I am so grateful for the opportunities I've had to connect with neighbors," said Roger Moore of Desert Hot Springs. "Even with social distancing, I feel like I've made some genuine relationships where previously we were acquaintances. It feels honest."

Jennifer McKeough of Washington, D.C. has been volunteering with Chef Jose Andres's World Central Kitchen. "I love to cook and this opportunity is the most fulfilling thing I've done in a long time." Those being served include health care workers, police, fire fighters, seniors, the homeless and more. "I've worked alongside people from the state department to out of work restaurant servers. We are all the same and it has truly been an honor."

**The return of old-fashioned fun**

As our busy schedules screeched to halt, idle time spurred much creativity (making social media that much more entertaining). A common thread shared by young and old alike is the return to activities offering the comfort of yesteryear; things overshadowed by technology and our fast-paced lives like family meals, board games, old movies, trips down memory lane, playing outdoors...

"We are simplifying what 'pleasure' and 'fun' means," said Lisa Corcoran mother of 10 from Malvern, Pa. who still has two boys at home ages 12 and 15. "Before, there was no time for imagination with school, sports, friends, etcetera. Now time is endless. As I write this, my boys are in the woods creating bike jumps from firewood and dirt. Good old-fashioned fun we haven't seen in a while."



Our human pause has brought back many classic activities like board games and puzzles.

"My wife and I are having fun watching old movies every evening," says Joe Scherger, MD of Rancho Mirage. "Classics from the 1940s and 1950s with Cary Grant, Audrey Hepburn, Doris Day, Jimmy Stewart."

Many readers shared stories of long phone conversations with old friends and distant relatives and sifting through old memories. "I have been reading old letters and journals and sorting photographs with both smiles and tears," said Gloria Sannermark of Peoria, Ariz. who, like many, is confined to her apartment in a retirement residence considered high risk for the virus. "The change in routine has provided much needed down time to clean out old stuff and decide what I want to bring into the future."

**Appreciation for what really matters**

Sannermark adds that she is most grateful that "instead of frustration or fear, my faith gives me a sense of peace and patience during this time of ambiguity."

Continued on page 21





# THE Paradigm Shift in Medicine Today

By Jeralyn Brossfield, MD



## Supporting Your Immune System

Living through a pandemic raises our awareness of the importance of our immune system. In preventing illness, there are generally two main principles: 1) Don't get it in the first place; 2) Have a strong defense system in place to fight the intruder and render it inactive.

We have rapidly transitioned to behaviors that address the first approach; social distancing, washing our hands and not touching our face are all tactics that decrease acquisition of viral illness. However, major benefit additionally comes from adopting behaviors that achieve a strong immune system to defend us.

**Mindfulness.** The first practice that strengthens immunity is increasing mindfulness activities. Taking a pause to listen to music, take a walk, meditate or visualize causes our body to increase production of white blood cells, which are our main disease fighting champions.

**Sleep.** Getting enough sleep is pivotal in supporting our white blood cells in creating antibodies. In studies of people's development of immunity after vaccinations, those who had full nights of rest in the days after receiving a vaccine developed twice the number of antibodies compared to those with sleep deprivation.

**Minimizing stress.** It seems so cliché to say minimizing stress is necessary when we are living in perhaps the most stressful time of our lives. However, the analogy that helps me the most is to compare stress to a bag of bricks at the side of my bed. When I get up each day, I have the option of picking up the bag or letting it rest on the floor a little longer, or perhaps even all day. It's a choice to carry stress, and it's a choice to set it down.

**Hydration.** Staying hydrated is extra beneficial when we are supporting immune function because water is crucial for detoxification. A good rule is to drink half of your body weight in ounces of water each day. If your urine is almost clear, then you know you are consuming enough water.

**Socialization.** Although we are challenged in finding alternative ways to associate with loving people during this time of social distancing, contact with others boosts our ability to ward off illness and is necessary for survival.

**Exercise.** Exercising moderately, preferably outside, not only increases blood flow and muscle tone, but allows immune fighting cells to more efficiently carry waste out of our body.

**Breathing.** Deep breathing exercises are an easy way to decrease our anxiety and also exercise our lungs. Whether you prefer to just take a couple deep breaths every hour, or practice techniques where you inhale, pause, exhale, pause, with an attempt to make the exhale longer than the inhale, breath work is beneficial for both mind and body.

**Nutrition.** Our immune system thrives when we eat mostly vegetables, fruit and load up on these foods that inhibit viral replication: green tea, flax seeds, citrus, oregano, ginger, garlic and turmeric.

**Supplements.** Lastly, making sure we are maintaining adequate levels of micronutrients supports our system in breaking down and destroying viruses. Recent evidence shows that zinc: 30 to 50 mg daily, selenium: 200 mcg daily, vitamin D: 5,000 IU daily, and vitamin C: 3,000 mg daily have demonstrable benefit in boosting immune capacity.

My prayers are that all of us share kindness and comfort during this time and that together we build stronger immune systems and stronger communities. Courage and love to each of you.

*Jeralyn Brossfield, MD, is the founder and physician of XO Health in Rancho Mirage and medical director of Brain Health Restoration also in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 573.2761 or www.brainhealthrestoration.com.*

### Learning from Those Preceding Us

*Continued from page 13*

*Disorders*, which is said to have been written in 220 AD. Its ancient teachings divide illness and viral infections into six stages, while *The Warm Disease Theory Wen Bing Xue* divides disease into four stages. These books, two of four classic TCM teachings, are hundreds of years old and still provide the basic groundwork for treatment of viral and bacterial infections and disease.

Based on these teachings, Dr. Chen categorizes viral disease in these four phases which helps doctors of both Eastern and Western medicine treat patients:

1. **Prevention Phase:** Focus is on strengthening the immune system
2. **Early Phase:**
  - a. Wind/cold invading the exterior
  - b. Toxic heat attacking the lung
  - c. Damp cold in the lung
3. **Pneumonia Phase:**
  - a. Shao Yang (lesser Yang) with damp, alternating cold and fever (the pathogen moving deeper)
  - b. Damp heat affecting the lung (pathogen entering the lungs/phlegm wet)
  - c. Toxic stagnation obstruction (the lung pathogen is now deeply rooted in lung; toxic inflammation and heat causes phlegm to congeal and get sticky; cytokine storm begins and the immune system goes out of control)
  - d. Closed interior and abandoned exterior syndrome (heat signs go away and cold sets in; fibroblast plugs block the alveoli air sac and a ventilator is needed)
4. **Recovery Stage:** Once a patient has recovered, there will be damage /scarring to the tissues in the lungs and Chinese herbs are prescribed to help soften and regenerate lung tissue and rebuild the immune system.

While the world continues to fight this disease, there is much countries can learn from each other and thousands of years of knowledge to consider.

We, at AcQpoint Wellness, send our heartfelt condolences and warm wishes to all who have been affected by the virus and express our gratitude to all the front-line doctors, nurses, hospital staff and grocery store and delivery service workers.

*Diane Sheppard is a licensed acupuncturist and doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. She is the owner of AcQpoint Wellness Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 345.2200 or visit www.AcQPoint.com*

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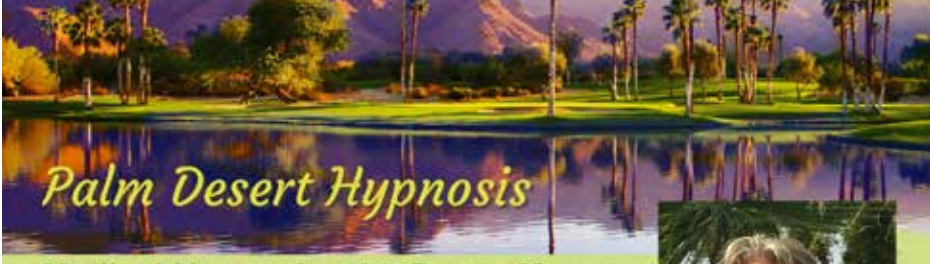
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## The Inflammation Spectrum: Find Your Food Triggers and Reset Your System

A Review by Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH

Following an anti-inflammatory diet can be confusing. Where do I start? What are the most inflammatory foods? How can I personalize such a diet for the food intolerances I have?

Will Cole, DC, a functional medicine expert in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, simplifies this topic in his new book, *The Inflammation Spectrum* (Avery, 2019). Dr. Cole does not consider lab testing for food allergies specific enough to be helpful. Rather, he uses what I use, an elimination diet plan. His spectrum starts with eliminating four food groups that are inflammatory to most people followed by four more that affect some people. Cole takes the reader through a methodical process of eliminating these foods one at a time and later reintroduces them one at a time per week to help people identify food triggers and create a personalized anti-inflammatory nutrition plan.

Cole distinguishes between a food allergy, food intolerance and food sensitivity. A **food allergy** involves the immune system and usually presents with an immediate reaction such as a rash, itching and/or hives. In extreme cases, there can be anaphylactic shock. A **food intolerance** is not immune mediated, but rather results in a digestive reaction such as gas, bloating or other irritable bowel symptoms. This usually comes from lack of enzymes to digest certain food. A **food sensitivity** is immune mediated, but is a delayed reaction and may be related to how much of the food you consumed.

With the elimination diet plan, the first four foods to eliminate are **grains** (with or without gluten), **dairy products** containing lactose and casein, **sugar and added sweeteners of all types**, and **inflammatory oils** such as all processed vegetable oils. These are best avoided anyway in a healthy diet and may be all a person needs to do to reduce inflammation.

The second four food groups to test by elimination include:

**Legumes** such as lentils, beans of all types and anything made from soy. Like Steven Gundry, MD notes, Cole points to their high lectin content as reason for avoidance.

**Nuts and seeds** including almonds, cashews, hazelnuts and walnuts. I'm surprised by this since I recommend nuts and seeds as superfoods, however, I must admit, some people tell me they are allergic to nuts and seeds.

**Eggs**, both whole eggs and egg whites. He reports that many people react to egg whites. While I've not seen this in my practice, I will look for it more carefully.

**Nightshades** including tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, white potatoes and goji berries. These all contain alkaloids and are inflammatory to some people. Again, a nod to Dr. Gundry.

On a final note, the author does a lot of preaching or talking down to the reader which some well educated in nutrition may find annoying. He also suggests the reader do a series of mantras which I found somewhat silly like the Stuart Smalley Daily Affirmations on "Saturday Night Live." If you overlook these quirks, you will find this book a simple and useful framework for following an anti-inflammatory diet. For more sophisticated coverage of this topic, I recommend Terry Wahls, MD's *The Wahls Protocol* (Avery, new edition 2020).

*Dr. Scherger is an Eisenhower Health Primary Care 365 physician, a core faculty member of the Eisenhower Family Medicine Residency Program, and a team physician for Reliance Hospice. He is also an author and his third edition book Lean and Fit: A Doctor's Journey to Healthy Nutrition and Greater Wellness is available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).*

### Out of the Darkness, Into the Light

Continued from page 5

Li rise from the darkness and depression of the disease (which he says few ever speak about) to the life of light and inspiration he now enjoys. "It is my hope that the book will inspire people to embrace their lives and live it to the fullest," he says.

Li attributes his motivation and many of his experiences to the caring team at Angel View. "If Angel View wasn't around, I wouldn't be here. They saved my life and I am very grateful."

They also offered Li opportunities he would not have gotten elsewhere including the chance to be on a local TV talk show. "I took it! It took off from there and more and more opportunities opened up." They support and encourage all his endeavors and donors made it possible for him to attend both the Emmys and the Palm Springs International Film Festival. His own movie, *Weightless*, debuted in 2014 at the Peacemaker Corps' Peace in the Streets Global Film Festival and won a second-place honorable mention. The anti-bullying film has now appeared in over 40 countries.

This is why Li is so passionate to bring awareness to the organization which features him in billboards and other commercials. He also gives back through speaking engagements, which share a theme of fearlessness. "I believe that with all I've learned about MD and my many life experiences, I've become a teacher without knowing it. I like to speak to those who are curious and want to listen."

What does he consider his greatest accomplishment so far? "My book, because of the journey. Writing out my emotions was very hard to do and I literally put my heart and soul into it. I had to relive all my past experiences - the tears, heartbreaks, sadness, depression; it took everything out of me."

His other great accomplishment? Living to 41.

"Embrace the positives, negatives and hardships of life," he says. "Learn to focus on things you can do, not the things you can't do. Take every opportunity that comes your way and make them happen. No one is stopping you, but yourself. And don't take anything for granted. There is always someone worse off than you."

During these challenging times, he adds, "We have to balance out our fears. Accept them and appreciate them. If we don't, we won't live. Just face them head on; worrying won't change anything."

*Peter Li's book Fueled by Misery is available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). He can be reached at [ptli@aol.com](mailto:ptli@aol.com).*



Peter Li celebrates a remarkable 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with his family.



# Trying to Hang Ten in a Tidal Wave

By Michele T. Sarna, AIF, AWMA

The year is 2020 and I'm on an island called Pandemic. The plan was to relax and enjoy the spring while preparing for the summer surf season. As I look out to sea, the series of waves catches my attention. There is a calming element to watching the tide go in and out. Depending on the time of day though, the waves get quite large causing a bit of anxiety wondering how big they may get.



Uncertain financial times don't have to feel like a tsunami.

Am I prepared for the different scenarios that may occur? Do I have time to wait out the overwhelming wall of water that lingers in front of me? What if I'm not as prepared as I thought I was? If an unexpected event were to occur, do I have enough time to recover? To stay the course?

It's a common scenario for similar questions to play out during normal financial planning sessions, and the answers are constantly challenged in times of great uncertainty. The ever-changing tides we experience cause us to react with extreme emotion, to possibly change our course, and to look for a more stable environment. However, during uncertain times, it's important to remember your plan.

How do tidal waves affect your portfolio?

If your investments are properly allocated for your age, needs and goals, minor tweaks may be all that are needed to rebalance it. When situations like our current environment occur, it's a good time to review and rebalance your investment accounts, if necessary, to ensure the investments remain suitable to provide future funding for your financial plans; whether they be short-, mid-, or long-term goals, each set of waves has its own characteristics to conquer.

Life has posed many tidal waves in our financial markets - the Great Depression, 9-11, and the 2008 Recession to name a few; however, with time, we bounced back. The calm tide will return again. Staying the course is paramount to your financial success.

Michele Sarna is a financial advisor at Beacon Pointe and can be reached at (760) 932.0930 or [msarna@beaconpointe.com](mailto:msarna@beaconpointe.com).

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## The Insomnia Complaint

Continued from page 5

### Unhelpful sleep practices you should avoid include:

**Getting into bed before there are any signs of drowsiness.** Often people feel they should go to bed early to catch up on sleep. However, you should not get into bed to get sleepy, but rather first get sleepy and then get into bed. If you are not sleepy, stay out of bed.

**Obsessing about mental exercises to clear your mind.** Often the exercise of trying to relax the mind can heighten the pressure to fall asleep and adds to the anxiety about not sleeping.

**Waking up in the middle of the night quite alert, staying in bed and lying awake for hours.** It is a better choice to get out of bed and go into another room and sit in a comfortable chair and read (something interesting, but not stimulating). If you happen to fall asleep in the chair, you will still benefit from that sleep.

**Using alcohol to help fall asleep.** Alcohol will likely lead to worsening sleep issues in the middle or end of the sleep period as the ethanol is rapidly metabolized in the bloodstream.

**Making a sudden transition from active mental tasks to trying to sleep.** I well recall a patient of mine, a woman in her 70s, who complained about sleep-onset insomnia. When I asked her what she did just prior to getting into bed, she mentioned that she watched the late evening news. She also mentioned how upset she was with all those politicians. Building a 15-30 minute calm period into your pre-bedtime routine can be very helpful.

**Trying to achieve fixed and unreasonable goals and expectations about your sleep.** These inappropriate thoughts and feelings compromise better sleep. For example, it's not true that you *must* get 8 or 9 hours of uninterrupted sleep or your health will be seriously compromised (a very stressful goal for those with insomnia).

### Are sleeping pills the answer?

With any discussion of Insomnia, the role of sleep pills for treatment must be addressed. Until about 10-15 years ago, sleep pills were the major approach to treating insomnia. While there remains a limited role for using prescribed hypnotic drugs, especially in patients with transient insomnia, sleep physicians have moved to other ways of managing chronic insomnia.

### The reasons to avoid sleep medications are many, but the three main ones include:

1. There is a high incidence of accommodation seen with most sleeping pills. They stop working after several weeks or months.
2. These medications are often accompanied by acute side effects such as abnormal behaviors in sleep, falls when getting out of bed and a morning "drugged-feeling."
3. Increasing numbers of studies may indicate an increased incidence of chronic diseases including cognitive impairment with chronic use of hypnotics.

### The recommended choice for insomnia treatment

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) has now become the recommended therapy of choice by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the American College of Physicians. CBT-I is a structured program that helps identify and replace thoughts and behaviors that cause or worsen sleep problems with habits that promote sound sleep. Today, most full-time sleep practitioners can provide this treatment which has been found to have a longer effect in treating insomnia with virtually no negative side effects.

If ignored, chronic insomnia will compromise your daytime activities and may lead to depression, pain syndromes and other chronic disease states. Insomnia should not be ignored by you or your primary care physician. Help is available and most cases can be improved, but there is no magic pill and changes will not occur overnight.

Dr. Menn is a board-certified sleep medicine specialist and a member of Desert Doctors. He can be reached at (760) 325.4100. [www.DesertDoctors.org](http://www.DesertDoctors.org)



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# Gluten-Free

with *Tiffany*

## Hippocrates' Soup

“Let food be thy medicine.” – Hippocrates, the father of medicine

Facing today's COVID-19 pandemic, our focus should be shifted to supporting the wonderfully complex immune system that protects us from foreign invaders. The best weapon against any disease is always prevention. To build that weapon, we need to feed our bodies with as much of the highest quality, immune-boosting foods as possible.

There is perhaps nothing more potent than the food grown from our earth. With so much “advanced” medicine, we may overlook the fact that many of today's modern drugs and treatments have been adapted from traditional medicine - plants and herbs! Human life has been treated for centuries by wise healers: shamans, medicine men, physicians, and practitioners of all kinds. All of them have known what science proves today, plants are strong medicine as prevention and treatment. Due to their unique biochemical structures, they work synergistically with the human body.

There is no better time to utilize the natural gift of plants and herbs at our disposal. This soup recipe, which is thousands of years old and said to have come from Hippocrates himself, is full of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals that specifically support the immune system. Consider consuming a good portion daily.



**Ingredients (organic preferred):**

- 1 medium celery knob or 3-4 stalks of celery
- 1 ½ pounds (or more) of tomatoes
- Garlic as desired
- 2 medium onions
- 2 small leeks (if not available, replace with 2 medium onions)
- 1 pound of potatoes
- Fresh parsley leaves and 1 medium parsley root, if available

**Preparation:** Wash the vegetables, do not peel. Cut all into slices or cubes, or grate. Place the vegetables in a large pot and add purified water in an amount sufficient to cover vegetables. Bring to a boil. Then reduce and cook over low heat for 90 to 120 minutes, until vegetables are tender. At the end, add garlic in small quantities. Create a puree of the soup in a blender, if possible. Remaining soup can be cooled and stored in the refrigerator for up to two days. It is necessary to cook on low heat with as little water as possible. For recipes that call for soup stock, use the liquid from this special healing soup.

*“The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patient in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease.”*  
 – Thomas Edison

Tiffany is a certified nutrition consultant and functional diagnostic nutrition practitioner and can be reached at (760) 285.1221. [www.GlutenFreeWithTiffany.com](http://www.GlutenFreeWithTiffany.com).

Sources: 1) Gerson Research: <http://gerson-research.org/hippocrates-soup/>; 2) <https://www.downtoearth.org/recipes/soups/hippocrates-soup/>; 3) <http://www.treating-cancer-alternatively.com/Hippocrates-Soup.html>

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## Healthy Peanut Butter Cups

By Lauren Del Sarto

Who doesn't love chocolate and peanut butter? Back in the day, a king-sized Reese's didn't stand a chance around me. Now, with a healthier diet, I have found you don't have to give up this addictive combo; simply change the ingredients for a guilt-free (and nutritious!) pleasure.

These **Chocolate Almond Peanut Butter Cups** from raw vegan chef Mimi Kirk are perfect for our warming days as you eat them straight out of the freezer.

**Ingredients:**

- 2 teaspoons hemp seeds
- 7 tablespoons solid coconut oil melted
- 2 teaspoons sunflower seeds
- 7 tablespoons cacao powder
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin seeds
- 3 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon maple syrup (or healthy sugar substitute of choice)
- 1 tablespoon almond butter
- Cupcake holders
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter (or other nut butter of choice)

**Preparation:**

- 1) Mix seeds together in a bowl and set aside.
- 2) Place solid coconut oil in a bowl and place over a pan of hot water to melt.
- 3) Mix nut butters together in a bowl and place over a pan of hot water to soften.
- 4) Place melted coconut oil, cacao powder and maple syrup or sugar in a bowl and combine well. Keep mixing until all granules of cacao are well incorporated and smooth.
- 5) Taste for sweetness and add more sweetener if necessary.

**Assembly:** Place six paper cupcake holders into cupcake tins. Put 4 teaspoons of chocolate combo into the bottom of each cup. Drop 2 teaspoons nut butter mixture on top of the chocolate. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon of the seed combo on top of nut butter. Lightly tap on counter to settle ingredients. Top each cup with 1 tablespoon of chocolate and divide the remaining chocolate between the cups. Lightly tap down tin when finished to meld together. Cover and place in freezer. Eat right from the freezer as coconut oil softens quickly at room temperature and enjoy every tantalizing bite!



Photo by Mike Mendell

Recipe from Mimi Kirk and Mia Kirk White's *Raw-Vitalize: The Easy, 21-Day Raw Food Recharge*.



## Deliciously Dehydrated

By Tricia Gehrlein

You can't talk about good health and proper nutrition without focusing on hydration as physical dehydration can land you in the emergency room. But eating dehydrated food can have quite the opposite effect on your body. The dehydration process seals in nutrients and provides delicious snacks with a long shelf life. Dehydrated food can be paleo and keto friendly and an excellent addition to all diets.

During the stay-at-home order, I started dehydrating food so I would always have healthy food on-hand should there be an emergency, but the real benefit I found is I can buy large quantities of healthy produce in season and dehydrate it for use during the year without sacrificing nutritional value. Also, this is a great way to have backpack-ready food for hiking or day trips. One other benefit is dehydrating food can be a fun and productive hobby.



Home use dehydrators range in price from \$40 to \$300.

Food dehydrators range from about \$40 for a four-tray model to \$100+ and even several hundred dollars for 10-11 tray units that are more industrial grade. Important features to look for include stainless steel trays and BPA-free plastic. Just to give you an idea of capacity, the model I bought has six trays and it took me 12 bananas to fill it.

I want to share some facts I learned in my research and tips I have discovered about the process of dehydrating food.

### Benefits of dehydrating food

- Significantly more nutrients are retained through dehydration than other preserving processes. Canned food loses 60-80 percent of its nutritional value; frozen food loses 40-60 percent, but the dehydration method only experiences a 3-5 percent nutrient loss.<sup>1</sup>
- Dehydrated foods are easier to store; they take up less space and dehydrated food weighs about 70-94 percent less than its original state.<sup>2</sup>
- If done properly, the shelf life for many dehydrated produce items is more than 20 years!<sup>3</sup>
- As we live in an area that is prone to rolling black-outs and earthquakes, dehydration is personally preferable to freezer food storage which could be lost during a power outage.
- You can dehydrate almost anything - from fruit and vegetables to meats, cheese, eggs, bread, yogurt drops and more. (I can't wait until my herb garden is ready to harvest!)



Hydrating retains more nutrients than other preserving processes.

### Tips I wish I knew before I started:

**Allow ample time.** It is not uncommon for some foods to require 12 hours to dehydrate. Since I do not like the thought of having the dehydrator run while I sleep (I'm sure it's safe BUT...), this means being ready to spend time prepping early so it is completed before bedtime.

**Determine your storage in advance.** Glass Mason jars or a vacuum sealer are best, with zip lock bags running second. I have no desire to buy another kitchen tool (vacuum sealer), so, I use jars and bags. Oxygen packs are recommended to include in jars and bags. I bought these cheaply on Amazon.

**Some fruits need special preparation.** Some foods (like apples and bananas) should be coated in lemon juice or citric acid prior to dehydrating. I bought powdered citric acid (also not expensive), and it is used in very small amounts. An additional tip when coating fruit is to use a spray bottle rather than a bowl of water with lemon/citric acid in it. That's much simpler.

If you're inspired to join me in this dehydrating journey, experiment with a few items, and share your favorites in the comments section of this article at [www.DesertHealthNews.com](http://www.DesertHealthNews.com).

Tricia Gehrlein of Morongo Valley is a population health consultant with Elemental Advisors and can be reached at [tricia@elementaladvisors.com](mailto:tricia@elementaladvisors.com).

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### Pause and Reflect

Continued from page 16

"I've learned through this pause that blessings come when we let go," expressed Sonja Fung, ND of La Quinta. "I'm grateful for my family, my understanding patients, and my strong, supportive clinic team. We can get through these tough times better together."

"I'm grateful for the time to artfully prepare dinners without having to rush off to the next activity," says Marcie Madain of Palm Desert. "The family all jumps in to help prepare and clean, and the conversations, while different, are a bit deeper as we reflect on our day, what we appreciate and won't take for granted ever again."

"I am also grateful for the realization that I am enough," adds Pam Salvadore. "Not having to subject myself to the judgement and societal expectations of the world at large has taught me that, as long as I am happy with myself, nobody else's expectations matter."

Many have found renewed appreciation for the beauty that surrounds us. As Dr. Scherger calls them, "the finer things in life like fresh air, nature, family and friends."

"We are so lucky to live in a place with so much wide-open space and perfect spring weather," notes *Desert Health* columnist Jennifer Di Francesco. "As things have slowed down in all of our lives, witnessing the blooming of flowers and the butterflies has been a wonderful sight to take in. It has reminded me to naturally slow down and not be forced to slow down; to take in the beauty around me."

As Editor Erika Byrd says, "I think we are all appreciating the little things more than ever."

Editorial by Founder and Publisher Lauren Del Sarto. [Lauren@DesertHealthNews.com](mailto:Lauren@DesertHealthNews.com)

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## Stay-At-Home Activities While Caring for Those with Dementia

Courtesy of Alzheimers Coachella Valley

During these unprecedented times when we are required to practice social distancing and shelter at home, families caring for a loved one with dementia at home face increased isolation and emotional challenges. Not being able to socialize in person with friends and extended family are difficult enough for everyone.

Keeping a sense of structure and consistency with routine as well as engaging in stimulating activities can help reduce tension and minimize stress for both caregiver and the diagnosed. Here are some ideas and activities for sheltering at home with a loved one who has Alzheimer's/dementia.

**Keep a routine.** Try to keep consistent daily times for waking up, mealtimes, bathing, dressing, activities, and bedtimes. Let your loved one know what to expect and involve them in daily activities as much as they're able.

**Keep it fun.** Incorporate favorite activities into your daily routine at a similar time each day. Some great activities for dementia patients at home include listening to music, especially from their past, that helps them remember good times. Dancing to their favorite music, playing a musical instrument or singing is very stimulating and creative.

**Add cognitive games.** Putting together a jig-saw puzzle reinforces problem solving, as does crossword or Sudoku puzzles. Simple board games, Bingo, and dominoes are also entertaining.

**Read or watch favorite movies.** Reading is a light exercise for the brain and stimulates the imagination. Rather than long books, short stories related to their past are a good way to rekindle long-term memories. In the same vein, watching movies or favorite TV episodes keeps them engaged and remembering.

**Let them help with chores.** Routine light cleaning chores can help loved ones retain their life skills and adds to the feeling of being productive. Food preparation and following a recipe can bring a feeling of accomplishment and purpose; however, caregivers should supervise any cooking. Setting or clearing the table and rinsing dishes are other ways to engage the loved one in important routine chores.

**Stimulate the senses.** Vary activities to stimulate different senses - sight, smell, hearing, touch and movement. Painting, gardening, playing with pets are some suggestions. Planning outdoor times can be very therapeutic. Go for a drive, take a short walk, visit a park, or even sitting on a balcony can be relaxing.

**Exercise.** Modified exercises such as stretching, deep breathing and light cardio are important physical activities that increase oxygen and release the feel-good endorphins to the brain.

You'll want to tailor activities to your loved one's current level of ability so they don't get frustrated. Many organizations that offer support and care for dementia patients and their families are utilizing technology to keep people connected. Now via live stream, these support groups, social activity groups and exercise and education programs are able to continue serving as an important lifeline.

Alzheimers Coachella Valley is currently offering two weekly support groups along with its social activity program, Club Journey, via live stream weekly. Silver Sneakers, available through most health care insurances, offers various live stream exercise lessons during the week. Check with your local chamber of commerce to learn about organizations that offer live stream help and support for caregivers.

For more information, visit [cvalzheimers.org](http://cvalzheimers.org) or call (760) 776.3100.

Sources: 1) <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/alzheimers-dementia-aging/tips-for-alzheimers-caregivers.htm>; 2) <https://www.byyour-sidecare.com/blog/memory-care/best-activities-for-alzheimers-patients>; 3) <https://www.agingcare.com/Articles/Alzheimers-disease-care-at-home-139990.htm>

## Turning Fear into Strength

By Dr. Amy Austin, PsyD, LMFT

As I write this, we are in the midst of unprecedented times, coming to grips with the idea that the world, as we knew it, is changing daily due to the coronavirus pandemic. Life seems surreal as if watching a futuristic science fiction movie, yet we are the stars. With all the doom and gloom that surrounds us from every angle of social media and television which is exacerbated by the stay-at-home-dictum, we struggle. We wonder what lies ahead and if our beautifully chaotic interconnected world will resume some semblance of normalcy. We raise our arms to the heavens for spiritual guidance and healing. Doctors, nurses, scientists and volunteers now join the ranks of hero first-responders, fighting on the front lines caring for and trying valiantly to save the lives of those afflicted. A nurse shared the ever-pressing weight of choosing to stay home to protect herself and her loved ones or to go try, yet another day, to fight the fight. She sadly said, "If I don't go, who will?"

The Beach Boys once sang that our reactions should be led by "cool heads and warm hearts."

That sounds pretty counter-intuitive since many responses have been based on irrational thinking and impetuous moves that tend to exacerbate the problem. Hence, not a roll of toilet paper in sight!

Fear can open us to a myriad of opportunities. It offers us a chance to become introspective and to mature as a human race. This is a beautiful thing. It's not a warning or a punishment and it isn't a doomsday scenario. Isn't it refreshing to be reminded that we have not mastered the universe? Can we view being told "no theaters, no partying, no traveling, no going anywhere" as liberating? We've come to believe there is so much more worth in being a human *doing* rather than a human *being*. The breaking of habitual patterns is creating a perfect atmosphere to have the life we choose - without fear. Everything is changing anyway. We are now encouraged to rethink where we place our energies, what we live for, what motivates us to get up in the morning. The world is going to be a much better place as soon as this thing is over.

When life seems bleak, feels bleak, we can only rise above. We have no other choice. Children are home from school and need our guidance and authentic positive energy. Can you imagine children saying decades from now, "Remember how our parent(s) stayed upbeat during the coronavirus?" What a wonderful legacy that would be!

Abraham Lincoln said, "We are as happy as we decide to be." Decide to be happy! We all have a purpose. We will get through this. There are gift feelings for every negative feeling: anger can create wisdom, loneliness can support us to reach out, pain can motivate us to explore and reveal our true purpose. We can and WILL turn our fears into strength.

Dr. Amy is a licensed marriage and family therapist (MFC#41252) and doctor of clinical psychology in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 776.0047 or [Ugohashem@aol.com](mailto:Ugohashem@aol.com).





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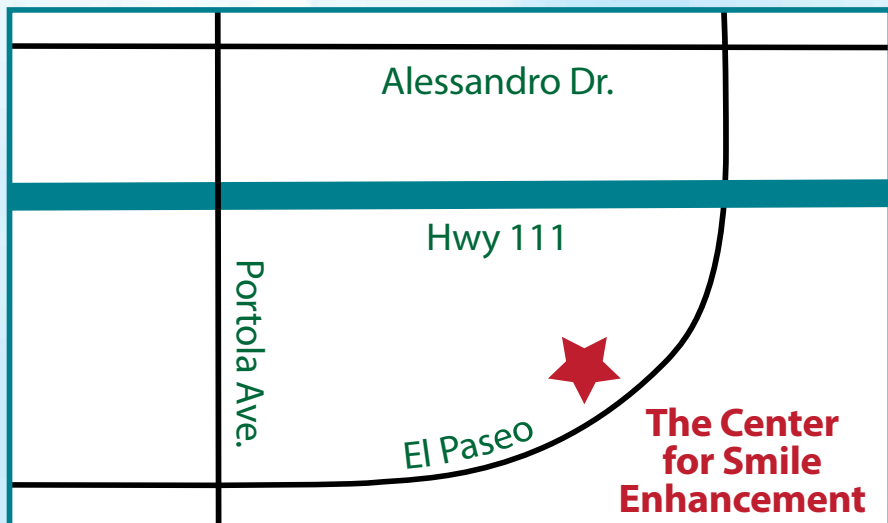
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