

A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is looking towards a doctor. The doctor, seen from the back, has blonde hair and is wearing a white lab coat. They are in a room with horizontal blinds in the background.

Your Health

Protect Your Health Info

Before computers, medical data was stored in paper files. These days, almost everything is gathered, analyzed and transmitted electronically. This means your personal information may be prone to cyber attacks.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) provides data privacy and security provisions for safeguarding medical information. This includes the HIPAA Privacy Act that gives you several different ways to ensure your medical data is being used and secured safely.

YOUR HIPAA RIGHTS

HIPAA grants you several benefits when it comes to finding health coverage. It can assist you in gaining coverage when starting a new job and lessen your chance of losing your existing care.

Here are a few different benefits you have under the HIPAA Privacy Act:

- Getting a copy of your medical record;
- Getting a notice about how your personal medical data is being shared; and
- Filing a complaint if you think your rights have been



violated.

SECURITY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

While you may not be able to set the level of security devoted to your medical data, there are still proactive ways you can approach your safety.

Regularly checking your credit can give you indications that your personal

information has been compromised. The sooner you see your information being misused, the sooner you can take corrective steps to regain control of your credit.

Your Social Security number is one of the most important pieces of information that needs to remain private. If compromised, someone else can open credit card

accounts, apply for loans and even gain access to your bank accounts.

The best ways to prevent someone else from gaining access to your SSN include: keeping your card in a safe place (at home, not a wallet), frequently checking your accounts for fraudulent activity and using an identity protection service.

TAKE CONTROL

While you may think leaving your data in the hands of your medical professionals means it's protected, it may not be in your best interest. Doctors are in charge of many different records, which can mean unintentional mistakes. Do yourself a favor and check up on your medical records to avoid errors.

Staying Healthy at Work

If you consistently put in full-time hours at your company, you probably find yourself exhausted after the end of a busy work day. Working 40-plus hours per week at any job can expose you to unhealthy habits and conditions, especially if you have a high-stress role with demanding responsibilities.

From washing your hands to making a little time for exercise during your work week, there are steps you can take to make sure you remain healthy at work.

DOING YOUR PART

Regardless of your workplace environment, bacteria can easily be found there. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends frequently washing your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds. It also is a good idea to keep a bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitizer around to use after coughing or blowing your nose.

Getting preventive vaccinations also is a good way to keep yourself and co-workers protected from seasonal viruses like the flu. If you are experiencing symptoms of the flu or any other contagious illness,



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ness, be sure to call your supervisor and explain that you feel it would be more responsible to take the day off.

BACTERIA HOT SPOTS

Aside from washing your hands, a good rule of thumb is to keep a package of anti-bacterial wipes on hand. Wipe down appliances that are

heavily used, like the microwave or vending machines, before you operate them.

Avoid using your co-workers' equipment. It's never a good idea to handle a co-worker's telephone, keyboard or other work tools. Especially if they aren't as apt to keep a clean environment, you may wind up negating your healthy behaviors.

EXERCISE AND DIET

It can be hard enough to dedicate yourself to a good exercise routine at home; trying it at the workplace may seem impossible. Depending on the type of job you have, exercise may be hard to come by, but it's important to squeeze it in when you can.

Busy work days make it too easy to justify picking up a

quick lunch from the local fast-food place. Instead, pack yourself a healthy lunch and eat at work. Utilize the extra time you saved by not driving to the fast-food restaurant to go on a walk during your break.

This combination of healthy eating and moderate exercise can do wonders for your waistline.

How to Choose a Physician

Your physician will learn many confidential things about you — things that you may even feel uncomfortable talking about with your closest friends. It's important to find a physician you can trust when discussing health-related details.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, the number of people with health insurance has increased dramatically. With this influx into the healthcare marketplace, it may actually be a challenge to find the perfect physician for you. Don't get discouraged, and definitely don't settle when you're making this very important decision.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Does your physician accept your insurance? Most insurance companies offer a directory, revealing all physician offices that accept their clients. For added assurance, call the physician's office to make sure it hasn't dropped your insurance plan.

Are you comfortable with the hospital your physician is affiliated with? If your physician deems that you need to be admitted to a hospital, you may not have a choice on where you go. If there is a hos-



pital in the area you are opposed to visiting for some reason, you may need to find a physician who isn't affiliated with that particular hospital.

COMFORTABILITY AT THE OFFICE

Feeling comfortable with your physician is a critical factor when making your choice. It also is important to pay attention to the other mem-

bers of your physician's staff. Remember, the people who are scheduling your appointments, relaying messages to your doctor and greeting you as you enter their building were put in place by your physician. Disrespectful or inefficient staff should be a red flag about the physician's practices.

A study by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public

Affairs Research discovered that over half of Americans focus on personality and relationship when it comes to choosing a physician. Look for a physician who seems interested in what you're saying. Someone who interrupts your sentences or inadequately answers your medical questions should convince you to keep shopping for a different physician.

OFFICE POLICIES

Each physician's office has different policies, but there are a few that should be industry standard. Consider finding a different physician if scheduling a routine appointment takes more than a week.

It also can be helpful to find out if the doctor offers same-day visits and ask how much time to expect to spend in the waiting room.

Consider the Podiatrist

You rely on your feet more than you realize. In fact, unless you're experiencing pain in your feet, how often do you think about their health? Certain conditions are prone to can cause chronic foot pain, making getting around unbearable.

A podiatrist can evaluate and treat many different ailments. They also will be able to determine if the structure of your foot will make you more susceptible to injuries and how you can prevent problems.

HOW IMPORTANT IS FOOT HEALTH?

The American Podiatric Medical Association states that your two feet contain more than 50 bones, 60 joints and 200 muscles, tendons and ligaments that work in unison. All those moving parts and your feet still can handle the stress of your busy day. That should be enough to get you to provide proper care.

Being further away from your heart than any other body part also may cause your feet to incur issues. Certain diseases, such as peripheral arterial disease, can slow down your heart's attempt to pump blood to your feet because of a buildup of plaque in your blood vessels.

COMMON FOOT CONDITIONS

Take a look below at some of the common conditions your feet may experience and learn what causes them. The good news is that a podiatrist can give you advice to

prevent these and many other conditions.

- **Athlete's foot:** A fungal infection commonly found in areas where many people walk around barefoot. Sweaty feet are more likely to catch this infection.

- **Ingrown toenail:** A toenail that pierces a person's skin causing inflammation and infection.

Wearing tight-fitting shoes or the same pair of socks without washing causes the skin to become moist and weaken, allowing the nail to penetrate more easily.

- **Verrucae:** Warts that are usually found on the soles or near toes on the feet. Again, caused by moist environments such as swimming pools and locker rooms.

BENEFITS OF A PODIATRIST

Your podiatrist can be helpful in any foot pain emergency. He or she also can assist in encouraging preventive measures so you have a much lower risk of experiencing these issues.

From gait analysis to selecting the proper size and fit of your footwear, your podiatrist can point you in the right direction for healthy feet for life. Reach out to your local podiatrist to set up your consultative appointment today. Your feet will thank you.



Healthy Grocery Shopping Tips

A trip to the grocery store can be stressful if you're not properly prepared. Impulse buys may induce bad shopping decisions. Learn how to prevent making these decisions and stick to healthy meals for yourself and your family.

A busy lifestyle can get in the way of healthy meal preparation. Sometimes the convenience of packing a lunch with a quick sandwich and some chips can be tempting. Consider some healthier alternatives and set aside a few hours to prepare healthy meals and snacks for the week.

Planning a smart grocery list is a great way to set yourself up for a healthy week of eating.

STICK TO YOUR LIST

Before you embark on your shopping trip, do your research. Find your store's weekly ad, look for healthy sale items and create your weekly meals from there. Having this list will make grocery shopping more efficient and greatly reduce the time you spend there.

Grocery stores are known for eye-catching displays that may sway you to make an impulse buy. Having a list and strictly following it will make it easier to avoid these displays and purchase only sensible food choices.

HEALTHY HOT SPOTS

If you have paid attention to the layout of most grocery stores, you've probably noticed that the healthier choices are

located around the perimeter. There, you will find the fresh produce, meats and dairy sections. Shopping the perimeter first will load your cart with healthy choices and make it easier to avoid packaged, processed foods found in the middle of the store.

Your grocery store's meat department can be a goldmine in the quest for a healthy shopping trip. Look for fresh fish and chicken. These two meats are packed with healthy fats and protein that will add loads of nutrition to any meal.

KEEP IT FRESH

When planning your healthy shopping trip, avoid processed foods and spend a little more on fresh items. Processed foods are loaded with preservatives in order to provide a longer shelf life. For instance, the meat that your butcher slices daily has much lower levels of sodium nitrite than that of the prepackaged meats that arrive frozen.

Consider purchasing your bread from the bakery, where most grocery stores bake their bread daily. Buying fresh bread helps you cut out many of the preservatives, artificial flavors and loads of added sugar that can be found in some of the processed options.



Why Sunscreen Is Good for You

Warm weather means not having to wake up extra early to scrape your windows or shovel your vehicle out of the snow to get to work on time. As welcoming as the sun may be, it's important to be keen on its dangers.

Many Americans associate the sun with barbecues, visits to the beach or just being outside in general. Of course, some Americans never worry about a cold-weather season because they live in climates where it's warm year-round.

No matter where you live, it's important to enjoy the sunny weather while also protecting yourself. Wearing proper sunscreen will ensure fun in the sun without damaging your skin.

WHY WEAR SUNSCREEN?

Skin is the largest organ in your body. It protects internal organs, regulates your body temperature and absorbs vitamins to repair damage. The importance of protection should be taken very seriously.

A good way to protect your skin on sunny days, is to generously apply sunscreen. Sunscreen uses several ingredients to create a barrier



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between your skin and the sun, especially young women.

The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 75,000 cases of melanoma (skin cancer) will be diagnosed in the United States in 2016. Melanoma rates have been increasing over the last 30 years. The average age of diagnosis is 63, but it is not rare to have a diagnosis in someone younger than 30,

WHICH SUNSCREEN TO CHOOSE

If you know what to look for in a sunscreen, protection from the sun can be easy. Most sunscreens will protect against UVB rays, which are the main cause of skin cancer. Certain sunscreens will advertise a “broad spectrum” pro-

tection. This is the type to purchase. That's because these products protect against UVB and UVA rays, which also are known to cause melanoma.

Remember that water-resistant doesn't mean waterproof. The American Cancer Society says to read the fine print on a bottle that makes this claim. It will specify

whether it lasts 40 or 80 minutes while swimming or sweating.

Another factor to consider in your sunscreen is the SPF, which stands for sun protection factor. The SPF number is the level of protection against UVB rays. A good level to have is SPF 30, as it will filter around 97 percent of UVB rays.



Cold Weather Workout Tips

Don't pack away your workout routine just because the weather turns cold. Exercise is important, no matter the temperature.

Although it may take more motivation, it is still possible to keep up your workout during the winter.

Certain factors can make winter exercise dangerous, but follow the tips below to keep the body you worked so hard for during the summer.

PLAN FOR DIFFERENT VARIABLES

Keeping an eye on your local weather forecast can save you a great deal of trouble when preparing for a workout. Plan to stay inside if the forecast calls for rain or snow. Unless you have waterproof exercise gear,

your body will have trouble keeping up your core temperature.

Wind chill is another factor to consider. The Mayo Clinic reports frostbite is rare when temperatures are above 5 degrees Fahrenheit but becomes much higher with a wind chill of minus-18 F. Even a warm set of clothing may not be enough to stop the wind from penetrating layers and making your skin vulnerable to frostbite in chilly conditions.

PROTECT YOURSELF

The cold may make it harder to realize that you are becoming dehydrated. You are just as likely to become dehydrated whether you're working out in the cold or heat. Keep your body hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after your work out. Just because you don't feel thirsty doesn't mean your body doesn't need to be replenished.

When your body is cold, blood flow is focused on the

core. This may make your hands and feet more susceptible to frostbite. Wearing a thin pair of gloves and covering them with a heavier pair lined with wool will protect your hands and give you a layer to remove if they become too hot.

A pair of shoes that are just a tad bigger than what you usually wear will give you room for a pair of thick, thermal socks to keep your feet from getting too cold.