

# Your Health



# Returning to the Workplace

Take time for yourself as we continue into the 'new normal'

Pandemic-era restrictions have fallen away, sending everyone streaming back into the various workplaces — but personal roadblocks may remain. Many have arrived with their own unsettled feelings, only to come face to face with a transformed workplace. It can be a lot to process.

## COPING MECHANISMS

Re-engage with people in a way that makes you feel safe. Physical interactions were one of the most important things we missed during the lockdown era. Return to your pre-pandemic health and nutrition routines, if you haven't already. Eating well, getting enough sleep and taking part in regular physical activities keep us healthy both physically and mentally. If you didn't have a hobby before, consider choosing one. Music, art and cooking are fun pastimes, and they're also great stress relievers.

Now is also the time to alter any part of your routine or commute that used to create undue pressure. Think out of the box, and you can come out of this stronger than ever.

## DIFFERENT MINDSET

One of the major lessons of the pandemic was that change is a constant. We need to acknowledge that when it comes to an ever-evolving



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virus and our knowledge of how it works. But we also need to acknowledge it at work.

Industries both small and large were forever impacted by the pandemic, and business models are changing before our eyes. What we do and how we do it may still be evolving, or have already been

altered completely.

Try to stay positive about change, creating routines that promote control when you can, but with a base recognition that we are still in transition.

## WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

Every part of our work life,

from job descriptions and company-culture statements to annual reviews, should begin to prioritize learning and growing, as well as a positive outlook about moving forward. So many things are different than before, but we can't turn back the clock. Set work-hour limits, create more flexible schedules, and allow

remote work when possible. The best companies will offer opportunities for mindfulness or meditation, whether it's a regular workday break or after-hours session.

Mental-health support should also be made more accessible as we move along, since some may continue to struggle with these changes.



# The Importance of Sleep

Being chronically tired can lead to serious health consequences

The busiest people might decide to shave off some sleep hours in order to fit in a few more responsibilities each day. Some of us simply have trouble turning off our brains. Others may have a physical problem that prevents them from falling or staying asleep. But the health risks involved with not getting enough rest are very serious.

## HUGE HEALTH IMPACTS

Sleep plays an important role in metabolism, immunity, memory and other vital brain functions. Those who sleep more are obviously better able to focus. But new studies suggest that getting a good night's rest is directly related to learning. Restorative, deep sleep cycles allow our brains to process new information, and consolidate it in ways so that these details can more easily be retrieved later. Not getting enough sleep can also lead us to rely too much on caffeine, and that can have its own negative impacts if used to high doses.

## HOW MUCH IS NEEDED?

Despite huge advances in the technology of sleep in the form of adjustable mattresses and memory pillows, a good night's sleep can remain frustratingly elusive. Work and family concerns can couple



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with a constantly changing world of information sharing to create what feels like a never-ending buzz. How much sleep you need varies based on age, from 14-17 hours a day for newborns to 7-8 hours for average older adults. The basic rule of thumb, however, is that your body will tell you when

you're not getting enough.

## GETTING MORE SLEEP

Maximize your opportunity for sleep by maintaining a consistent bedtime and waking hour, even on weekends. The National Sleep Foundation also recommends avoiding late-afternoon naps

— and not napping for more than 20 minutes. Stay away from caffeine late in the day, as well as alcohol.

Daily physical activity is good for your health, and for getting more sleep. Turn off all screens — yes, including the phone — at least an hour before you're ready to lie

down. They tend to artificially awaken us. If you're still struggling with sleep issues, consider the environment around you. Is there too much light? Too much noise? Design a room that's sleep friendly. If you continue to feel sleep deprived, reach out to your doctor.

# Taking Care of Your Feet

The average American has already walked an astounding 75,000 miles by the time they reach 50, according to a study by the American Podiatric Medical Association.

If you'd put that kind of distance on your car tires, it would be past time for a replacement. But we only have one pair of feet, so that means taking better care of them.

## KNOW THE RISKS

Regular care can help lead to early detection and treatment of foot and ankle issues. In the meantime, you'll also learn more about how to avoid pain and injury. The most common issues are sprains, fractures and strains. But each foot actually has more than 30 joints which can be impacted by arthritis, a particularly painful situation since we're on our feet all day. Sprains are soft tissue injuries that may occur during every-day activity, while fractures involve a broken bone. People who do a lot of walking, standing or running as part of their work or leisure time are susceptible to both sudden injury and gradual conditions that include arthritis. These situations often simply require rest, but may also lead to surgery.

## INSIDE THE NUMBERS

The APMA reports that half



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of all U.S. citizens report foot pain at some point. There are more than 50,000 work-related foot injuries a year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Many might assume that the bulk of these mishaps involve more senior Americans. But the mean age for those who've been injured is actually

just over 34. More than 80% of these injuries happen to men. One of the faster growing issues is plantar fasciitis, an inflammation in the arch of the foot suffered by nearly 2 million patients a year.

## HEALTHIER FEET

Stretch and exercise your

toes and feet throughout the day to avoid muscle cramps. Moisturize your feet to help with cracked, dry and irritated skin.

If you sit too long, raise your legs or stand up to lessen related swelling in the feet. It's also crucial to wear the right kind of shoes for the

activity you're taking part in. Custom-fit or pre-packaged shoe inserts can provide aid and relief for those with Plantar Fasciitis, since they support your arches. They're less effective for other foot issues, according to the American Podiatric Medical Association.



# How to Start ‘Eating Clean’

You’ve probably heard the term, but what does it mean?

There’s a growing trend toward eating natural, more healthy foods. That’s led many to cut out added preservatives and sugars, as well. Dubbed “eating clean,” this movement can have a direct impact on your health.

## WHAT IT MEANS

Many of the things you’d be avoiding by eating clean are already recommended by the American Heart Association, which has instructed us to eat less sugar. Men should consume no more than nine teaspoons of sugar a day, while women limit their consumption to about six. A single can of soda typically meets or exceeds that quota. Study the nutritional information on what you buy, and you’ll likely find a host of additives and preservatives that the people who follow these guidelines are also trying to avoid.

## SMARTER DIETS

Switching to healthier alternatives is smart even if you haven’t found yourself eating too many baked goods, sugary cereals or candy. Ditch pre-packaged items and instead buy fresh foods. Adults are urged to consume some three cups of vegetables and fruit per day by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. How much will depend on your age, gender and level of



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physical activity each day. The easiest way to think about it, however, is that half of your plate should be comprised of these foods.

You’ll be meeting your body’s nutritional needs — and the guidelines — while also getting a host of needed vitamins, heart-healthy fiber

and antioxidants that you won’t find elsewhere.

## HUGE BENEFITS

Eating clean can lead to lower inflammation, the root of so much pain.

Many people also enjoy weight loss, better sleep and a greater sense of focus. As you

get more vitamins and minerals, your skin will become healthier, too. There are mood enhancing properties to many of the foods you’ll eat. Most report having more energy, so there is no need for over-caffeination or energy drinks. Consuming additives, processed foods and sugar is

thought to create unnatural stress on your immune system, which spends a lot of energy protecting your body. Eating clean frees up those resources to fight viruses. As you continue detoxing from all of those bad food habits, cravings decrease and your will power improves.



# Prevent Illness Before it Starts

Research confirms that we can prevent or lessen these impacts

Personal wellness is about more than treating symptoms. In fact, preventative care is far more important, since so many health issues can be predicted or better managed if they're detected early.

## HOW IT WORKS

Most insurance plans cover preventative care like check-ups at no cost. Yet millions don't get the early attention they need, worsening medical outcomes. Some may not have a primary physician, or perhaps live too far away from care providers. Others simply suffer from lack of awareness. These regular checkups with a physician provide a baseline from which to monitor changes in your health. They'll check for high blood pressure, diabetes, vision and weight changes, various types of cancer, and other common issues. In many cases, early detection can help block the worst impacts.

The doctor will set up a management program, sometimes involving activities or medicine and other times perhaps prescribing surgical options. If left untreated, many of these health problems become far worse, even deadly.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH

Women who are 30 to 65 years old are encouraged to have an HPV test and Pap test



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every five years. Women should also have yearly mammograms to detect signs of breast cancer as early as possible. Talk about chronic diseases that have been a part of your family history, so that the proper testing can be put in place. They'll keep an eye on worrisome changes in areas

like vision and weight, too. Tell your doctor about feelings of depression, which should also be discussed during routine exams. They may have staff or systems in place to provide diagnosis and effective treatments, or they may refer you to a more specialized caregiver.

## MEN'S HEALTH

Screenings for high blood pressure should be made every other year, or more often for those already experiencing symptoms. Diabetes checks are recommended at least every third year for those with sustained high blood pressure. Men ages 35 and older should

also be screened for lipid issues every five years, as well as those at an increased risk for coronary artery disease. Discuss the risk of colorectal cancers with your caregiver, who will help you make informed decisions based on your age, family history and any current medical issues.



# Is Coffee Good for You?

We've long turned to coffee for a quick pick-me-up in the morning.

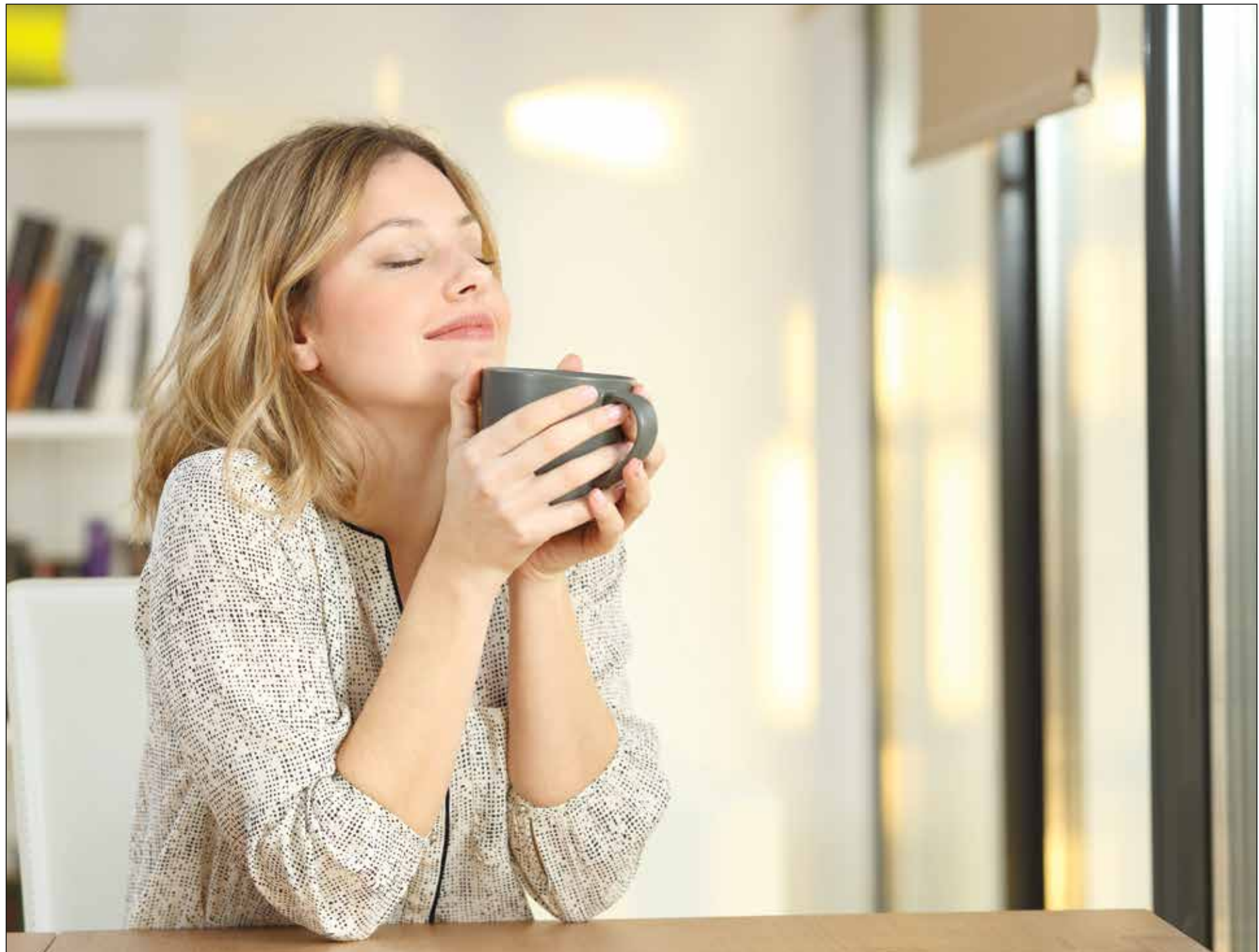
Many people simply love to indulge in the various flavors that are naturally present in this savory drink. Yet whether or not it was actually good for you was a topic of debate for a very long time.

## NEW RESEARCH

Doctors are increasingly linking coffee with better outcomes against Type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's and liver disease. Coffee may also decrease the risk of depression and improve our cognitive functions, according to studies cited by the Mayo Clinic. It wasn't always this way. In fact, coffee has long been blamed for a range of health issues, from causing cancer to stunting our growth. But earlier studies didn't tend to factor in other known high-risk behaviors among coffee drinkers of that era, including lack of physical activity and smoking. Newer research now shows a connection between consumption of coffee and decreased mortality rates.

## POSSIBLE RISKS

Coffee isn't entirely risk free, but impacts are usually related to other health issues. For instance, drinking two cups or more of coffee each day may increase heart disease risks for those with a genetic mutation which slows the processing of



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caffeine. Some elevation in cholesterol levels has been linked to very high consumption of unfiltered coffees like espresso. Then there are the risks associated with the things so many people add to their coffee. Milk, sugar and flavorings contain excess calories, unhealthy ingredients and other additives

which can increase negative health outcomes.

## SMART TIPS

Some may need to limit their intake of coffee, including women who are breastfeeding or pregnant, children and those with certain health conditions. But enjoying coffee

in moderation, meaning three to four cups a day, is considered generally safe among adults. It's what we often add that lessens its positive health impacts. Avoid flavored syrups, which are usually very high in sugars, as well as whipped cream. Order smaller sizes rather than your

typical "grande," in particular if you plan to pair your drinks with cream or other sugary options. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends fat-free or low-fat milk options. But plain, so-called "black" coffee is your healthiest option.

# Don't Forget Ear Health

Poor care can lead to permanent impairment or deafness.

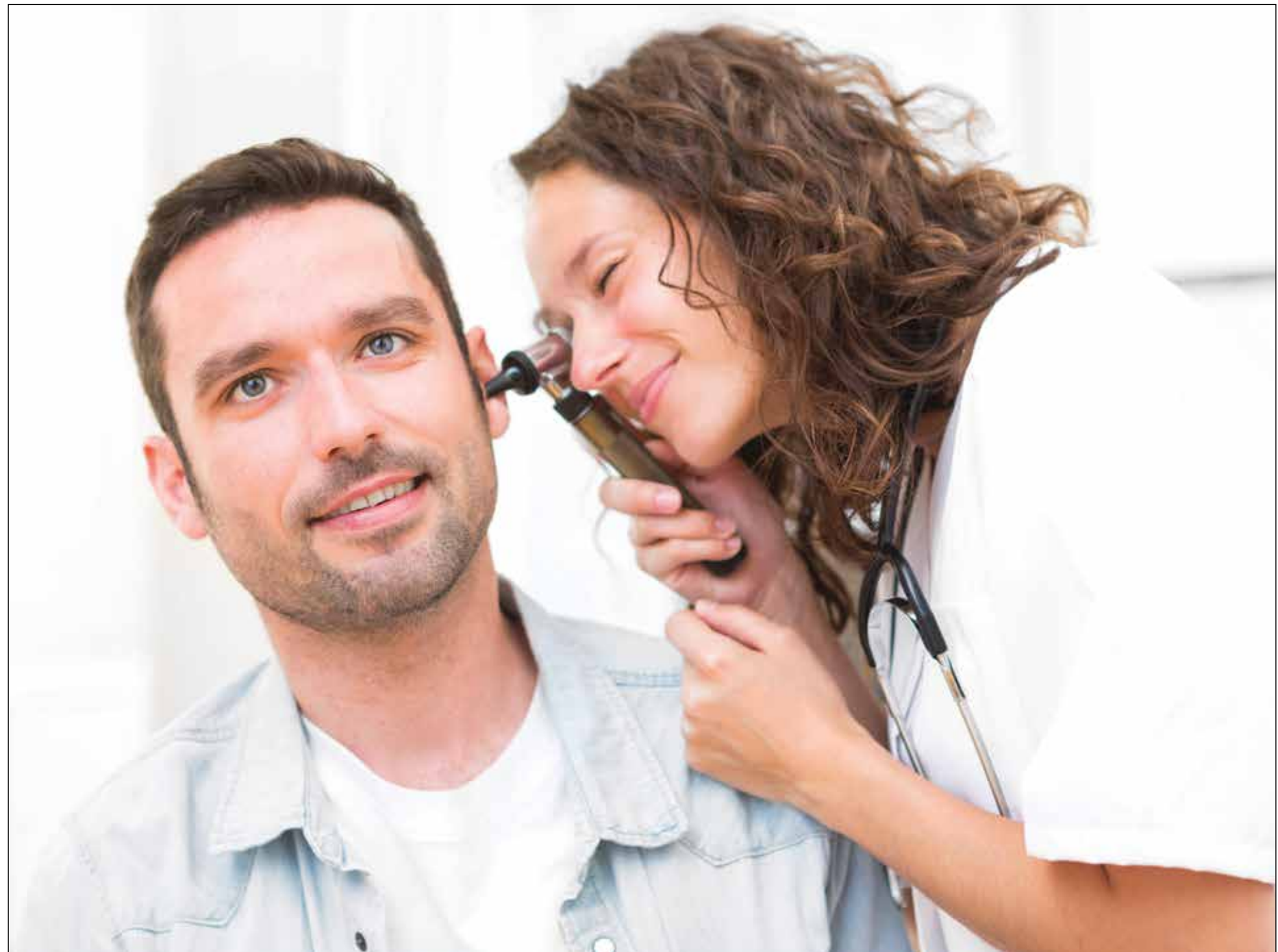
Many forms of hearing loss can be prevented, and most can be treated. Unfortunately, too many people tend to take this critical sense for granted. They put themselves on a path to impairment while taking part in risky behaviors — or simply by ignore obvious warning signs.

## INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Hearing loss is our third most common malady after arthritis and heart disease. This major public-health issue impacts nearly 50 million American adults in some fashion, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America. One of the most well-known issues is tinnitus, a persistent ringing in the ears typically caused by excessive noise. Children may also suffer hearing loss by way of a middle-ear infection, a condition called “otitis media.” Many conditions are progressive, meaning they can lead to irreversible impairment or even deafness. That’s why prompt medical attention should be sought if you, or someone you love, begins to have problems with their ears or obvious issues in hearing.

## COMMON PROBLEMS

Hearing loss in some cases may be sudden, in particular when associated with injury. But oftentimes, it is a more progressive issue. Protect your



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hearing by limiting the time spent using headphones or experiencing loud sounds. You should use headphones no more than one hour per day, according to the World Health Organization, and the volume should never be turned up to more than 60%.

Noise-canceling headphones

are recommended since they help listeners resist the urge to turn up the volume. Certain medicines have been linked to hearing loss, so it’s important to take prescriptions exactly as instructed. That includes over-the-counter medicines, since aspirin or ibuprofen can contribute to hearing loss if not

used properly.

## HEALTHY TIPS

Be aware of early warning signs like difficulty following conversations, frequent requests to repeat things or consistently misunderstanding what others say.

You may notice problems

with balance, or a ringing sensation early on. Wax build up is sometimes to blame. Be aware of pain or itching, since they’re key warning signs. Consult a primary-care physician to determine the cause, and set an appropriate treatment plan. They may recommend a specialist. In the meantime, only clean the outside of your ear.