

JIFNEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund featuring Safety, Health & Wellness



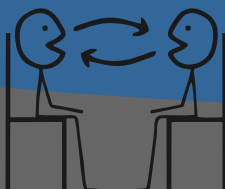
Are we so connected that we're losing our connections?

Recently, my attention was drawn to a 3-year-old sitting on the floor repeatedly calling, "Mommy, mommy, look!" But mommy was absorbed in her smart phone, texting or emailing and oblivious to her child's calls. On a daily basis, people cross streets and walk around neighborhoods, barely looking up to see what's going on in the world around them — they are too captivated by what's on their screens. This troubles me. Have we become so intent on staying connected, technologically, that we've lost our connection to the world and those around us?

Children learn to connect and relate to others on a deeper level by experiencing face-to-face interaction with parents and other caregivers. The same is true for adults. The more we connect personally with others, the stronger our heart-brain connection, which results in a greater capacity for interaction, friendship and empathy. These types of connections all positively impact our health. Research shows that the more we connect through technology, the less we are attuned to facial expressions and the human voice. As a result, we become less aware of the subtle information that is communicated through someone's voice and face.

So put down your devices and connect with someone face-to-face. It will do you both good.

BY JANE EHRMAN, M.ED



5 Simple Tips for Better Sleep

Many people feel that there just aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish everything they need to get done, and in many cases, they react by cutting down on the amount of sleep they get. As many as 70 million adults in the United States have sleep disorders or problems staying awake during the day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Sleep deprivation is a real problem, with CDC authorities calling it a public health epidemic. Some 35 percent of adults said they get less than 7 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period, and almost 38 percent have fallen asleep unintentionally during the previous month, according to a Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System report.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to get the rest you need. Here are some tips for better sleep.

STIMULANTS | If you consume caffeinated beverages, such as coffee, tea, sodas or energy drinks, confine their use to the early part of the day. Avoid caffeine and other stimulants for at least four to six hours before your bedtime.

EATING | Do most of your eating early in the day. Start off with a hearty breakfast and enjoy a sensible lunch. Avoid eating a huge meal late at night, as you need several hours to digest your food properly.

You can relax better when your digestive system isn't working overtime on the extra large pizza you ate at 9 p.m. Also remember to refrain from drinking too many fluids close to bedtime, as you may have to wake up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom.

EXERCISE | Although exercise is generally good for you and can help you get to sleep quicker, you need to do it earlier in the day to achieve this effect. Don't exercise for at least three hours before bed to avoid over-stimulating yourself.

LIGHT | With the advent of electricity, and appliances such as lights, TVs and computers, it's far easier for people to remain awake all night. If you have a habit of staying on your computer until just before you go to bed, your mind may become too aroused to let you easily drift off to sleep.

Likewise, you may be having problems with sleep because you watch TV in bed. TV shows are quite engaging and can keep you up at night. It's best to keep the TV out of your bedroom and watch it in another room in your home. When it's time to go to sleep, turn off the TV and keep your bedroom dark and quiet for maximum relaxation.

WORRIES | If pending tasks are keeping you up at night, you need to devise a method to better cope with them so you can get a good night's sleep. One approach is to make a list of your upcoming activities. Writing down what you need to do the next day can help you get these tasks out of your mind so you don't lie in bed thinking about them.

Occasional insomnia may only cause you some annoyance, but if you are experiencing prolonged periods where you have trouble getting to sleep even after trying some of these tips, you will want to consider consulting with your doctor or other health care professional for assistance.

BY WELLNESS EDITOR

Lawn Mower Safety



We've all seen our next door neighbor, a grandmother, gallantly riding her shiny, yellow Cub Cadet while her two year old grandson holds onto the steering, apparently enjoying the ride as if were an amusement park roller coaster. While this may be a Kodak moment, it's not the safest, or therefore the smartest thing she could be doing. And, since I'm both a writer and a former landscaping company owner and employee, I can say that I've learned a lot in regards to mower safety. So, upon my pedestal I'll preach onward.

First and foremost, let's discuss riding mowers. Riding mowers, ranging from 10 to even 40 horsepower pack a lot of punch. Imagine, this same grandmother allowing her two-year-old grandson to lead forty horses to stable. It's not going to happen! The grandkid shouldn't be allowed near the machine, ever.

Next, while spotting granny riding with her grandson, we see that she's sporting her new pink beach sandals. While the beach (or anywhere but here) is a great place for sandals, she should be wearing some protective gear. More people in the US lose toes (or feet) to this type of nonchalant behavior around mowers than any other accident. This is the same for push-mowers and weed eaters, where the chance of losing a toe can be multiplied

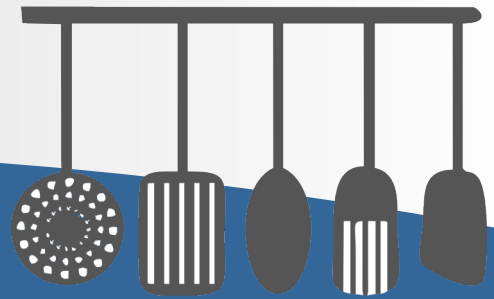
two-fold. At the very least, try wearing socks and sneakers. Better yet, where steel toed boots and jeans. And, keep grandkid with grandpa far away from your mower and from any windows in the house.

Finally, when granny trims (as she's gotten pretty tired from controlling all those horses), she attempts to finish up by mowing around the shrubs out back. While doing so, we look out the window and notice that she is pulling the mower behind her with one arm. She's ingeniously duct-taped the safety handle down too. While noting this, nothing has happened to her, but she's lucky.

You should always face the mower engine and keep both hands on the push bar, even if you step back while mowing. Step once, then again. This way, you won't pull the mower over your heels or Achilles tendon if you happen to fall. And, never tie or tape down the safety.

So, while there's a lot to talk about in regard to mower safety, keep granny in mind. Go ahead and go out and talk to her about what you've learned. You'll only be doing her a favor. Plus, you'll keep all this in mind now that mowing season is upon us in full steam. Grandkid will grow up plenty fast enough to help granny out one of these days!

FROM LAWMOWERFACTS.COM



Albacore Tuna Stuffed Tomato & Arugula Salad

This dish, packed with omega-3 fatty acids, is a terrific no-cook solution for a hot summer lunch or light dinner. Serve with a glass of wine and enjoy!

Yield: 4 Servings

INGREDIENTS:

2-5 ounce cans albacore tuna in water, drained
1/4 cup plain, non-fat Greek yogurt
1/4 cup light mayonnaise
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup red pepper, diced
1/4 cup carrots, shredded
1/2 cup celery, diced
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon minced dehydrated onion
4 medium tomatoes, cut in half and hollowed out
4 cups baby arugula
1-1/2 tablespoons balsamic vinaigrette
(see recipe below)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Mix yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice, black pepper and dehydrated onion in a large mixing bowl. Add chopped vegetables and tuna and mix gently.
2. In a separate mixing bowl, lightly toss arugula with balsamic vinaigrette.
3. Divide arugula into four portions; top with two hollowed out tomato halves, stuffed with prepared tuna salad.

BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

Yield: Makes 5 Servings
Serving Size 1-1/2 tablespoons

INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon whole grain mustard
2 teaspoons parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon garlic, minced

INSTRUCTIONS:

Place all the ingredients in a small bowl, slowly add the oil while whisking.

Nutrition Info Per Serving: (1/4 of recipe, with 1 1/2 tablespoons vinaigrette): 220 calories, 10 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 400 mg sodium, 2 g fiber, 7 g sugars, 20 g protein, 35 mg cholesterol, 12 g carbohydrate

BY CLEVELAND CLINIC WELLNESS EDITORS