

Caring For You

The Shenandoah Valley in winter. GETTY IMAGES

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Augusta
Health

START YOUR NEW YEAR WITH A NEW WELLNESS RESOLUTION

Early Cancer Detection Screening Guide

Screening	Age to Start	Frequency	Age to End
Mammogram	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual (55+ every 2 years) • Self-exam monthly 	
Colorectal	45		75 (76-85 talk to your doctor)
Cervical Cancer	25	Primary HPV test every 5 years	65 unless there is a history of cervical cancer
Lung*	50		80
Prostate*	50		



Carolynn Nesselrodt
BSN, RN
Center for Cancer & Blood Disorders

*Discuss with your doctor to find out if lung screenings are necessary if you have a history of heavy smoking or quit within 15 years.

*Talk to your doctor to see if prostate exams are necessary for you.

The year of 2022 is already upon us, and after nearly two years of pandemic talk and stress, we are ready for better health, wellness, positivity and less COVID discussions! With gradually decreasing positivity rates, higher vaccine numbers, and a new year, what better time than now to shift the conversation to setting goals and resolutions of maintaining better health overall?

As nurses, we know how important it is to see a doctor for regular checkups and screenings. Prevention is key to successful outcomes as it can directly impact prognosis. Often delaying a checkup or putting off seeing a physician out of fear happens but it is not needed; we are here to help. The easiest and most important treatment

for cancer, or most health conditions for that matter, is prevention. So, let's discuss how you can set a new year's resolution for better health and wellness.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), men and women ages 18-39 should see their primary care provider regularly—annually for a physical or sooner for concerns or questions. This gives your doctor the opportunity to check your blood pressure, your blood work, provide a breast or testicular/prostate exam, update your vaccines if needed, and assess for any other health concerns that may require further investigation. These annual physical exams give you and your doctor the opportunity to get ahead of your health and manage those modifiable diseases that plague Americans like diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity and more.

Many screenings begin around age 40 per recommendation from the American Cancer Society (ACS).

- Women should begin receiving annual breast cancer screenings through mammogram detection around age 40 (Don't forget your monthly self-breast exams; they're so important ladies!).

- Everyone's "favorite" screening, the colonoscopy, should typically begin at age 45 and continue until 75. Colonoscopies are nerve provoking, but early detection saves lives!

- The ACS recommends cervical cancer screenings at age 25.

- Lung cancer screening recommendations can be based on age, smoking history, and other risk factors, and should be discussed with your doctor.

- Prostate cancer screenings typically start at age 50.

All these screening tests, and more, can start at different ages based upon different risk factors for every individual, which is why it is so important to have regular checkups and open discussions with your doctor.

The NIH and ACS both have very informative websites that go into further detail about what various screenings in take and what risk factors may change your individual recommendations. I urge you to look at them. I encourage you to use your 2022 resolution to take a proactive role in your physical (and let's not forget emotional) wellbeing by scheduling your annual checkup now.

Here's to wishing you all a very happy and healthy New Year!

AVOID THE CIRCADIAN KILLERS



Ivan Napotnik
RN, BSN
Cardiovascular Services

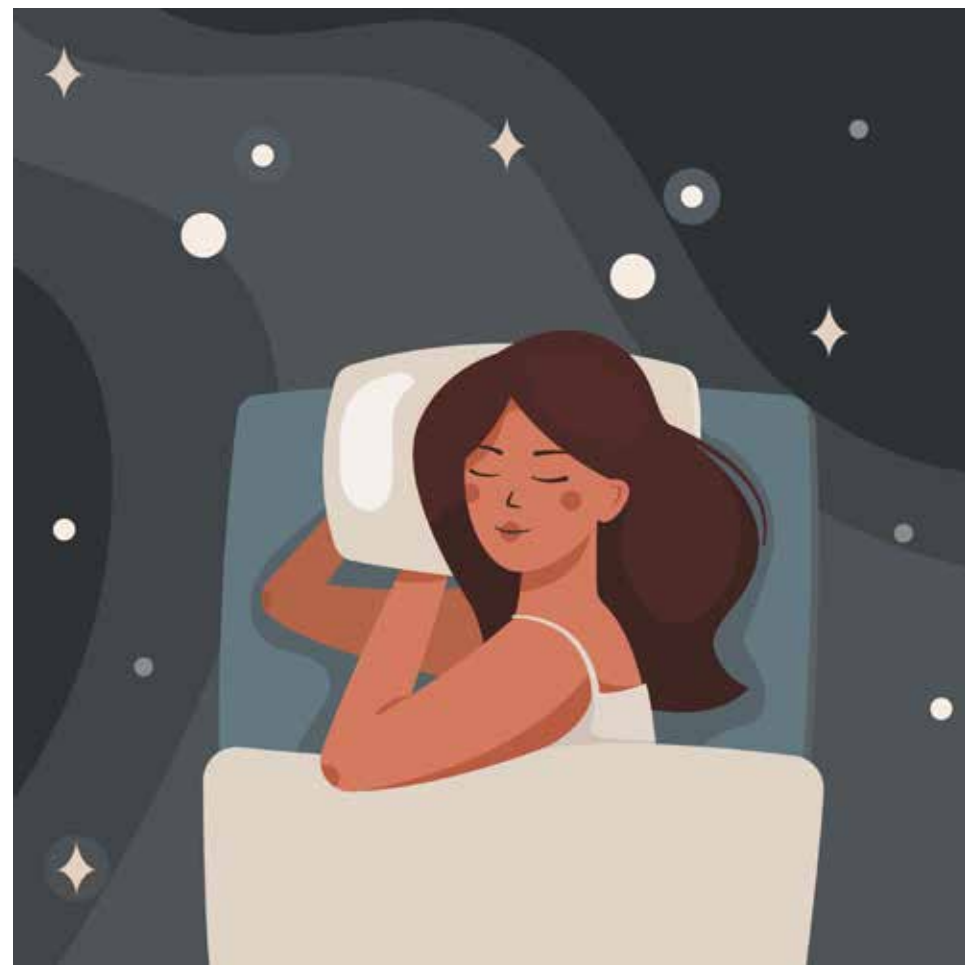
We have all heard how important good sleep is for both our physical and mental health — but how many of us have surrendered to poor sleep and even label ourselves as poor sleepers?

Sleep is too important for us to accept anything less than what our bodies need; our health literally depends on it. The Sleep Foundation states that poor sleep can slow our thinking, reduce our attention span, deplete our energy, and increase our anxiety levels and irritability. So, poor sleep is bad but what is “good sleep”? Good sleep is all about the circadian rhythm, which is the control center for our sleep and wakefulness. While our circadian rhythm can be disrupt-

ed by uncontrollable factors like sleep disorders, many times the root cause is our own behavior, external factors that we can control.

Now, before we talk about the quality of our sleep, we’ve got to discuss the quantity. Time devoted to sleep must be a priority if you want to improve your sleeping habits. The CDC reports that a third of adults in the US do not spend enough time sleeping. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends 7 or more hours of sleep, noting that anything less than 7 hours is linked to adverse health outcomes. In addition to time asleep, the quality of our sleep matters and that’s where we have to focus on protecting our circadian rhythms.

A few of the major disruptors of our



circadian rhythm can be inconsistent sleep schedules and eating or drinking late at night. These disruptors are things we can control. Maintaining a consistent bedtime routine which involves going to sleep and waking up around the same time, every day, even on the weekends, is best for our circadian rhythm. That means we need to limit the time in front of our electronic screens and go to sleep. These screens have also been shown to stimulate our minds and make it more difficult to fall asleep.

Another disruptor is eating and drinking late in the day, especially if it’s alcohol or caffeine. The Sleep Foundation states that alcohol consumption before bed has been linked to poor sleep quality and caffeine, a stimulant, makes it more difficult to

fall asleep. The American Sleep Association states that eating foods high in sugar before bed causes large fluctuations in our blood sugar which affects our sleep and foods high in fat take longer to digest which impacts the quality of our sleep as well. Instead, avoid eating or drinking anything 1-2 hours before bed for the best quality sleep.

Sources for additional information:

- The Sleep Foundation, [sleepfoundation.org/sleep-deprivation](https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-deprivation)
- American Sleep Association, [sleepassociation.org/blog-post/the-11-worst-foods-to-eat-before-bed](https://www.sleepassociation.org/blog-post/the-11-worst-foods-to-eat-before-bed)
- The American Academy of Sleep Medicine, [aasm.org/resources/pdf/pressroom/adult-sleep-duration-consensus.pdf](https://www.aasm.org/resources/pdf/pressroom/adult-sleep-duration-consensus.pdf)
- The CDC, [cdc.gov/sleep](https://www.cdc.gov/sleep)

REDUCING STRESS THROUGH MINDFULNESS



It's OK to just relax and exist

Charlotte D. Maiden
MSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA
 Outpatient Surgery/
 Post-Anesthesia Care Unit/
 Pre-Admission Testing



As a result of the COVID pandemic, we all have had to adjust our way of life. We are seeing those in healthcare exhausted and overworked while trying to divide time between family and work, but even in the face of fear and anxiety, their resilience has shown a strong sense of community.

In an article, in Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine (2020), our cultural structure has been uncompromisingly challenged by mounting family responsibilities, changing family dynamics, and financial uncertainties.

The practice of mindfulness is a method of stress relief that supports healthcare providers, patients, care givers, and the general public. In an article from The Psych Professionals (2019), mindfulness is defined as “moment to moment awareness...being here for the moments of our lives”. This means we should live in the ‘now’ and allow negative thoughts to leave our minds as quickly as they came in.

We spend a large portion of our lives on auto pilot missing the sights, sounds, smells and joys we should appreciate. Mindfulness involves breathing techniques, guided imagery, ways to relax the body, and mind-reducing stress. Time devoted to making

plans, solving problems, or negative thinking increases stress, anxiety and depression. By utilizing mindfulness practices, your attention is focused on engaging with the world around you and away from negative thinking.

Simple ways to practice mindfulness:

- Pay attention—Take the time to experience life with your sense of touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste. When eating a favorite food for example, take the time to smell, taste and truly enjoy it.
- Live in the moment—Find joy in simple pleasures.
- Accept yourself—Treat yourself the way you would behave toward a good friend.

• Stop and take a breath—When negative thoughts come into your mind, close your eyes and take a deep breath. Have your focus be on your breathing as air moves in and out of your body—even just one minute can help.

COVID has shown us that change is the only constant. Mindfulness can offer a way to live with this constant change and realize that you do not have to be doing something every moment of the day...it's okay to just relax and exist.

The Soul Usually Knows What to Do to Heal Itself. THE CHALLENGE IS TO SILENCE THE MIND.

DOES DIET REALLY AFFECT YOUR HEALTH?



Susanna W. Carter
RN, BSN, PCCNN
Progressive Care Unit



The old expression “you are what you eat” may not be too far from the truth. The nutritional value of what goes into our bodies really does affect our overall health.

According to the World Health Organization “Good health is essential for nutritional well-being as good nutrition is crucial for maintaining good health”. Just as a healthy diet helps protect us from non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer, an unhealthy diet can pose the opposite.

Healthy diet practices are best started early in life but are beneficial to implement at any stage. The convenience of the grab-and-go food choices today are very appealing but may not be the best choices for our health. When choosing food options, we must consider the nutritional value of the

calories we consume and the non-nutritional value. We all require food for energy, but often that energy (calories) exceeds what we actually need. We all have those days when we need that afternoon burst of energy. We pick up a sugary snack and feel great until our body realizes the imbalance of energy only to leave us craving more.

The key to a well-balanced diet is not to consume too much of a certain thing such as salt, sugar, and fats. We get bombarded with the latest food fad or trendy ingredient and lose sight of the balance. We can all reap some short-term benefits from that energy balance such as circadian rhythms, GI health, and healthy weights that transcend to long term benefits.

When we consider changing our eating habits, we often focus on foods we need to cut out rather than the foods we need to add. By incorporating more nutritional foods into our

diet, it helps to alleviate non nutritional foods also known as “empty calories” without leaving us feeling deprived.

Forming any habit takes time is best achieved by planning meals and snacks as well as having them readily available. A well-balanced diet consists of reducing saturated fats to 10% of calories, trans fat to 1%, salt to less than 5 grams, sugar to less than 10%, and total fat to less than 30%. This may all sound complicated due to the time it takes to calculate the balance of calories versus nutritional needs, but can be broken down into a more simplistic picture.

Most processed, pre-packaged foods and snacks automatically exceed the daily recommendations for trans, saturated and total fat, salt, and sugar. Sports drinks, pasta, breads, flavored water, and condiments such as sauces contain a high amount of hidden

sugar and salt. Good eating habits can begin by purchasing fresh fruits, vegetables, lean cuts of meat, adding fish and legumes into your diet. Trading white breads for whole grain, skim milk, using olive oil instead of cooking oil, baking instead of frying, and limiting alcohol are all ways to begin.

The Harvard Nutrition Source suggests making most of your meal vegetable and fruits – ½ of your plate. Go for whole grains such as oats, brown rice, barley and wheat - ¼ of your plate. Protein such as fish, poultry, beans, nuts, lean meats have power! -1/4of your plate. Healthy plant oils in moderation like olive, canola, soy, sunflower, and peanut do not contain trans fats. Dairy products should be limited to 2 servings a day. Drink plenty of water and limit alcohol intake to occasional.

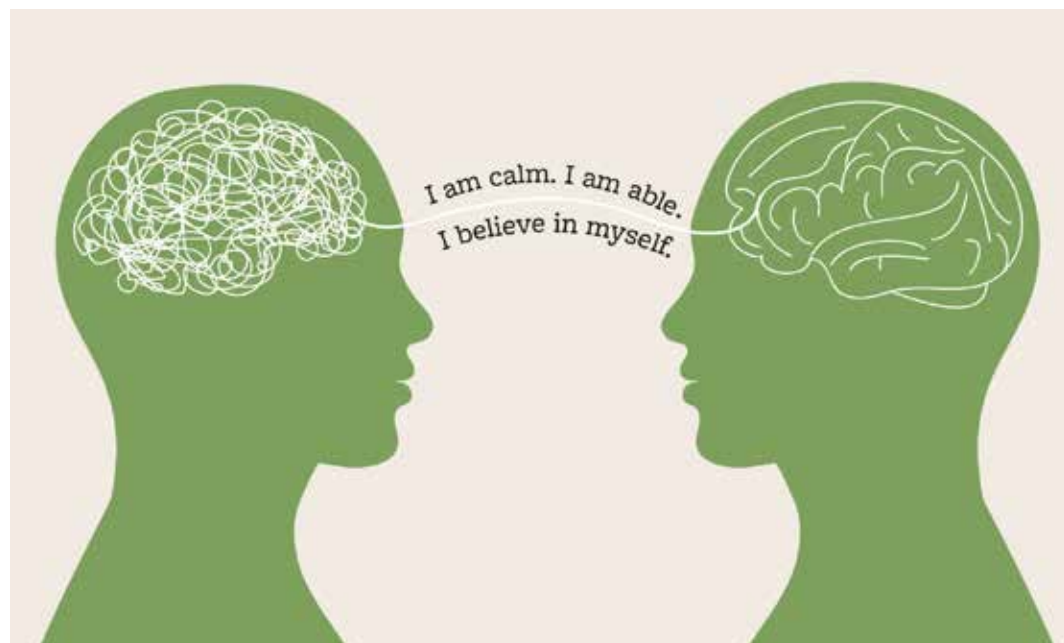
Here’s to a Healthy and Happy New Year!

PATHWAYS OF POWER!

The power of positive thinking: rewiring negative mental patterns for success



Amanda Wilson
BSN, RN
Director of Professional
Practice & Education for
Nursing



Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has made a mark on the mental well-being of individuals across the world. For healthcare providers and our community – we have seen, grieved, and experienced a tremendous amount of stress since March of 2020. Who would have ever imagined, at the start of this, that we would still be fighting this battle two years later? Could we have even handled knowing that it would be this long?

Our strategies as the pandemic evolved have strengthened and been tested as we forged through the phases of chaos to find order. We have also had to balance health and safety tactics with strategies for emotional and mental wellbeing, as we supported our nursing team to provide care for both

our community and to each other. Burnout and mental wellbeing are not new topics in healthcare. This epidemic in our profession was growing well before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Yet, as healthcare providers, we have had to face the ultimate challenge of applying this knowledge and research about burnout and mental resilience strategies into our personal and professional practices.

One evidenced-based strategy we piloted with our Augusta Health nursing team during the pandemic was the implementation of a program called MINDBODYSTRONG®, which came out of the research of Bernadette Melnyk at The Ohio State University. This program is a 7-week cognitive behavioral theory curriculum that was built to strengthen the mental resolve for healthcare clinicians. The techniques and tools help individuals to cope with and build stronger patterns for personal wellbeing management.

You may have heard it takes approximately 3 weeks, or 21 days, to change a habit – *but do you know how long it takes to rewire a negative thought pattern?* Unlike a new habit, it actually takes **60 days** of consistent practice to adjust negative thinking patterns. Not just 60 days 60 days of **consistent practice!** While it may be easy to know what to do, it's not easy to always practice and adopt these techniques into a daily habit. Our thought patterns are automatic and may appear to lie inactive, often times we do not understand the powerful message they play in the background of our thinking and behavior patterns. Yet these thoughts trigger our emotions and feelings, which results in our actions and behavior. How we think affects how we feel and behave.

In MINDBODYSTRONG®, clinicians practice building skills to support better mechanisms for coping with stress, to reduce anxiety and other

progressive and depressive symptoms that can result. As we look ahead to a fresh year in 2022, try adopting a simple phrase to help rebuild, or rewire, your patterns of thinking! It can be something quick like: *I am calm. I am able. I believe in myself. These feelings are temporary.* Practice telling yourself this phrase (out loud!) ten times in the morning and ten times in the evening – then commit to practicing this for the first 60 days in 2022. With *consistent* practice, you will find yourself transitioning to a new level of awareness between your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Powerful practices like this have been shown to make enhanced neurological changes, or new pathways, in imaging studies. Take a step toward a new and healthier pathway for 2022 by transforming a negative pattern into a positive one that fuels confidence and success! You deserve it.

A HEALTHIER LIFE STARTS WITH TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF FIRST



Hannah Snow
RN
Obstetrics



Self-care starts with the conscious decision to devote time and energy to your wellness.

This could mean making certain modifications to your lifestyle to alleviate stress and promote health. The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This makes us look at all dimensions of how a person functions physically, mentally, and socially, all of which

are essential to a person’s well-being and life satisfaction.

There are many ways you can care for yourself.

- Fitness and a well-balanced diet are important to physical health.
- Meditation, relaxation, and positive self-talk are great ways to care for yourself mentally each day.
- Discover activities that you enjoy doing and set aside time especially for

them. This could be journaling, reading your favorite book, crafting, and playing or listening to music. Others may enjoy spending time outdoors, going on a short walk around your block or adventuring a bit further to find a new hiking trail, casting your line into a nearby river while you wait for a fish to bite, or simply soaking up some sunshine on the back porch and listening to the birds while you sip on a cup of tea. Every person is different so try multiple things to find what makes you feel relaxed and rejuvenated.

• Social health is also essential. One of the most important ways you can care for yourself socially is setting healthy boundaries with others. Form a good support system. This may consist of friends, family, neighbors, a faith-based community, or coworkers. Nurture these relationships with kindness and understanding, but do not forget to be kind to yourself.

Remember self-care starts with you and your choice to make a change to lead a healthier life.

I was there when you were scared.

I was there to hold your hand.

I was there to ease your pain.

I was there when you fell asleep.

I was there when you woke up.

I am here.

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