

Completely Well



Insurance Agency

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Preventive

Lung Cancer Awareness Month

Lung Cancer Awareness Month is devoted to spreading the facts about lung cancer and raising awareness of the risk factors. The lungs are sponge-like organs, a right lung and a left lung. Cancer is a disease characterized by the uncontrolled division and growth of abnormal cells. In the case of lung cancer, it is the uncontrolled division and growth of abnormal cells in the lungs.

The most common type of lung cancer is non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). NSCLC makes up approximately 80% of all lung cancer diagnoses. Small cell lung cancer (SCLC) is the second most common type of lung cancer. SCLC is a fast-growing cancer compared to NSCLC. Cancer in the lungs can also result from other cancers that have spread to the lungs. Though not typically diagnosed as lung cancer, treatment of these cancers is often the same as NSCLC and SCLC.

Symptoms of lung cancer can be mistaken for many other conditions. Coughing, shortness of breath, pain in the chest, and fatigue are common. Coughing up blood and pneumonia are also symptoms. Other symptoms occur when the cancer has spread, including jaundice, nausea, vomiting, headaches, and lack of appetite.

Lung cancer is diagnosed through x-rays, CAT scans, and biopsy. Treatment will depend on type, location, and how advanced the cancer is. Treatment options include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation.

The greatest risk factor for lung cancer is tobacco use. Approximately 85% of all lung cancers are a result of tobacco use. Smoking cigarettes, pipes, cigars, and e-cigarettes all increase the risk of lung cancer. Additionally, exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of lung cancer. Other risk factors include exposure to asbestos, radon, and family history.

Discuss your risk factors with your doctor and determine if you need to be screened for lung cancer. To reduce your risk, avoid all tobacco use and secondhand smoke. Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and exercise regularly.

The Great American Smokeout

On November 19, 2015, the American Cancer Society will hold its annual Great American Smokeout. The goal of the day is to encourage all smokers to quit smoking for at least 1 day in the hopes that they can commit to quitting for good. The dangers of smoking are very real and include dangers to those who inhale secondhand smoke. And while tobacco is an addictive substance, the serious effects of smoking should make the decision to quit this addiction a little easier.

According to the American Cancer Society, tobacco “remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States.” Smoking is the cause of over 400,000 premature deaths a year. Secondhand smoke is the cause of approximately 38,000 deaths of nonsmokers. Smoking is a primary cause of heart disease and many cancers. Nicotine, the active ingredient in tobacco, is addicting in the same way that cocaine is. It raises blood pressure, heart rate and restricts blood flow to the heart. In large doses, nicotine would be fatal.

The physical benefits of quitting smoking happen within the first day. Continue as a nonsmoker and the benefits increase! Quitting smoking can be challenging, but is ultimately worth it for your health and the health of your family. If you are a smoker, consider participating in the Great American Smokeout on November 19th. Ask your family and friends to support you as you do this, and hopefully you can commit to remaining a nonsmoker.

Nutrition

Stuffed - How to Measure Hunger

While there is a relationship between hunger and eating, there is not always a relationship between eating and hunger. In other words, when we are hungry we seek to eat, but we seek to eat for many reasons, only one of them being hunger. So what is hunger? Is it what my body feels or is it the cravings we feel?

Understanding hunger is complex, but we can begin with a chemical component. There are hormones that are released in response to various levels of nutrients in the blood stream and the digestive tract. Ghrelin, the primary hormone for stimulating hunger, is released in the stomach and sends signals to the brain to start eating. This hormone is released when your stomach is empty; your blood sugar is low or when you haven't eaten in a few hours. Once you get some food in your stomach, the level of Ghrelin goes down.

But that is only a part of the story. Our feeling of hunger is also affected by our senses. Smelling cookies baking in the oven can stimulate hunger. Seeing a piece of steamy pizza, hearing a commercial for your favorite pasta sauce, or getting a sample of chocolate from your local candy store can all make you feel hungry. The colors in your food, on your plate and around you can also stimulate or suppress your hunger.

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Stuffed, Continued...

Research has shown that red, yellow and orange stimulate hunger while blue suppresses it.

For many of us, our feelings of hunger have an emotional component. Eating out of stress, sadness or nervousness is common. It's important to mention, though, that emotional eating is not about real hunger. Real hunger comes on gradually and can be satisfied with a variety of foods. Emotional eating is most often focused on a specific taste or food – salty, sweet, chocolate, chips, etc.

It is important to be aware of the many reasons we may “feel hungry.” Choosing to eat high fiber, high nutritious foods on a regular basis can help control hunger. Understanding that our senses impact our hunger and that emotional eating is something not really related to hunger could help reduce mindless eating. It's simplistic to think that we will only eat because our bodies need food. But if we can pay more attention to our real hunger, feed it appropriately and “feed” our emotional needs without food, we will find

Tips for Recognizing Hunger

- Your stomach is growling.
- It has been 3-4 hours since you've eaten.
- You are still hungry after having a glass of water.
- Healthy food sounds good!



Produce of the Month: Cranberries

At their peak October –through December, the cranberry is considered a holiday berry, the perfect compliment to turkey and a great addition to dessert. But the cranberry is also a nutrient powerhouse, known for its anti-inflammatory properties. Tart, tangy and vibrant, cranberries can be used in both savory and sweet dishes.

The Basics: Fresh cranberries are generally sold in bags or pints. They should be brightly colored, firm and free of bruises. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Be sure to rinse well before using.

Try This: Combine cranberries with a sweeter fruit – such as orange or pineapple. Heat in a pan until cranberries begin to open. Serve with low fat ice cream or a little whipped cream.

The Facts: A half-cup of cranberries is 25 calories and a good source of vitamin C and fiber.



The Healing Power of Thank You

You know how to be healthy, right? Exercise, eat right, get plenty of rest. Did you know that a daily dose of thankfulness is also good for your health? When you actively focus on feeling thankful for something, important physical changes happen that benefit your heart, immune system and mood.

Feeling gratitude reduces the levels of stress hormones that are released by the adrenal glands during times of mental or physical stress, such as a work deadline, lack of sleep, illness, etc. The stress hormones, including cortisol, are designed to help your body and mind deal with the stress. But, when we are consistently under stress, the high levels of cortisol we experience can be harmful. Too much cortisol is associated with thyroid, blood sugar and bone density problems. It is also linked to a higher blood pressure, weight gain (specifically in the abdominal area) and can affect your immune system. According to Dr. Christiane Northrup, feeling gratitude reduces the level of cortisol in the blood stream, lessening the negative impact that stress hormones can have on the body.

Other physical benefits to feeling gratitude include an increased blood supply to the heart, caused by a relaxation of the arteries. Also, more oxygen is taken in as breathing both slows and deepens (Northrup). Gratitude is associated with increased optimism, which researchers have found improve the immune system. Those who actively feel gratitude are more likely to take better care of themselves, exercising and eating a healthy diet. They are also more likely to have a strong social network, another positive for heart health and a strong immune system.

It is possible, and relatively easy, to increase your feelings of gratitude and all the positive benefits it creates. Keeping a gratitude journal is an easy way to improve both your mood and health. According to Robert Emmons, psychology professor at the University of California Davis, people who keep a gratitude journal exercise more, have fewer physical symptoms and complaints and feel more optimistic about their future. Research has also shown that moods can be contagious and that we often surround ourselves with people who share our general attitudes. It stands to reason then that, if we wish to increase a positive, grateful approach to life, we should surround ourselves with people who share these qualities.

No matter whether it is a physical response to gratitude or an overall positive mood, our health is improved by actively working on gratitude. According to author Melodie Beattie, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more."



America Recycles Day

November 15, 2015 is America Recycles Day. Recycling reduces the amount of trash that will be sent to landfills. Many communities include recycling as part of a weekly garbage pickup, and some communities offer special events for recycling electronics, paint, batteries, and other materials.

Recycling helps the planet in many ways. First, it helps to preserve natural resources. Recycling also reduces pollution.

Garbage that is not put in a landfill is often sent to an incinerator to be burned, and recycling reduces those emissions. The recycling industry also creates jobs, both in the transport and processing of recyclable goods.

Recycling is good for all us. Look for special recycling events in your area celebrating America Recycles Day.

Fitness

Fitness and Lung Health

We know that exercise improves heart health, but fitness is important for lung health, too. When we start to exercise aerobically, our heart rate increases and the rate and depth of our breathing increases as well. Our lungs take in more oxygen. This oxygen is sent in to the blood stream where it provides the muscles with more energy. Additionally, the lungs help to remove carbon dioxide from the body.

While exercise won't make your lungs any bigger or stronger, it can make them more effective. Regular exercise can increase your lung capacity, which is important for overall health. Without good lung capacity, you may have less energy, an increased risk of heart attack, and increased systemic inflammation. Lung capacity is so important that the Framington Study (a 3 decade long study guided by the National heart, Lung and Blood Institute) found that lung capacity was the greatest predictor of health.

To improve lung capacity, exercise regularly. If you are healthy enough, adding brief high intensity bursts of exercise (like interval training) will increase lung capacity. Be sure to check with your doctor before adding any exercise routine.

Fitness is as much about health as it is about a physique. Make exercise a regular part of your day for improved lung health.

Should I exercise if I have a chronic lung condition?

First, ask your doctor about what exercises are safe for you to do. If your doctor has given you permission to exercise, pay attention to your exertion level; breathe as deeply as you can while avoiding breathlessness. Try to exercise in clean air environments, avoiding car exhaust and other pollutants. Exercise can help improve lung function. It is also good for your heart, your immune system, and your mental health.

Ask the Trainer: Fitness Gift Ideas

By Erin M. Long, NSCA-CPT

It's that time of year again! Time to start thinking about gifts for family and friends. Why not give the gift of health and fitness?

When it comes to the right facility, you have to think about where you or a loved one would be comfortable working out. Consider the size of the facility as well as the hours it is opened and activities it offers.

Once you find a facility you like, you should find out if the instructors are certified. There are a hundred different personal training and group instructor certifications out there so I am going to make this simple. There are only 10 certifications that are recognized by the NCCA (The National Commission for Certifying Agencies). This is of the utmost important. The standards of being recognized by this company are very high. Also ask about the instructors' experience and other education in the fitness or health field. The more education and experience the better.

Lastly, see if there is any "money back guarantee" if this gift doesn't work out. Many gyms and fitness centers will work with you if you let them know you are purchasing a gift. Discuss all of the options before you commit to a long-term contract.

Want to know more?

Contact TCU Insurance for information on wellness programs. We can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee well being.

