



MAY 2021

Wellness Matters

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Stay Healthy

Advancing Social Well-Being

The pandemic has made it difficult to be social. As we slowly return to normal activities, remember how social well-being impacts our mental health. Make an effort to stay socially connected with family, friends, and your community.

Why It Matters

Social connectivity is the feeling of closeness and connectedness to a community. Each connection has a lasting impact on our physical and mental health—so it's important to focus on connectivity to support both yourself and others in your network.

Research shows that people who take part in meaningful and productive social activities generally live longer, have a sense of purpose, and maintain a better mood. Additionally, social connectedness has the following health benefits:

- Strengthened immune system
- Increased feelings of happiness

- Improved memory and cognitive skills
- Motivation for self-care
- Decreased levels of stress

Even virtual connections can help ease stress, reduce suffering, and promote overall wellness. Whether introverted or



extroverted, everyone needs social contact to maintain physical and mental health.

How to Stay Connected

Create ways to connect and reconnect with your network:

- Embrace technology. Stay connected with friends and loved ones in person and through video calls, social media, and phone calls.

- Never stop learning. Try virtual or in-person classes or events to keep learning and meet new people.
- Get moving. Exercise can make you feel energized and less stressed. Make it a daily goal to move!
- Volunteer. If you are healthy and able, support nonprofits, help food banks, or donate blood. Consider helping those who live alone or seniors who may need extra help.
- Go green. Surrounding yourself with earth-friendly products and processes minimizes the negative impact you have on your world and your own body.
- Invent fun ways to connect with family: try cooking, baking, games, or puzzles.

If feeling isolated or worried about your state of mind, contact your doctor or mental health professional.

World No Tobacco Day

According to the American Lung Association, smoking kills over 480,000 people every year. The most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) shows a decline in U.S. adult smokers, but an estimated 34 million still smoke cigarettes.

The tobacco epidemic is so pervasive that the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) supports *World No Tobacco Day*, held annually on May 31. In honor of *World No Tobacco Day* this year, take some time to learn about the benefits of smoking cessation and how you or a loved one can get started on the journey to stop smoking.

More than 16 million Americans are living with a smoking-related disease like cancer, heart disease or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. With all the health risks associated with smoking, it's important to extinguish your smoking habit for good. Here are some suggestions to get you started on your journey to being smoke-free:

- Think about when and why you smoke—keep track of when you light up and how you're feeling. Identifying your triggers can help you prepare to quit.
- Think of the many benefits to quitting, like extending your lifespan, saving more money, and feeling healthier overall, to stay motivated.
- Plan ahead for cigarette cravings to stay on track. Some common strategies for managing cravings include chewing gum, eating a healthy snack, or taking a walk when you feel the urge to smoke.
- Be sure to share your plans with your loved ones so that they can help support you and hold you accountable.

It's never too late to start your smoking cessation journey. Talk to your doctor today to create a cessation strategy that's right for you.



Healthy & Nutritious Sugar Substitutes and You

At a first glance, artificial sweeteners seem like harmless sugar and attractive alternatives to standard. Sugar substitutes provide a sweet taste without the calories or carbohydrates that accompany sugar and other sweeteners. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the use of acesulfame-K (Sunnett®), aspartame (Equal®), neotame, saccharin (Sweet'N Low®), sucralose (Splenda®) and stevia.

Despite this approval, some health experts discourage the use of sugar substitutes. Keep the following tips in mind to ensure that you're safely consuming them:

- Always read the nutritional facts on foods and drinks to know what and how much of a substitute is being used.
- Review the acceptable daily intake guidelines for each approved sugar substitute on the FDA's website.
- Remember, just because a product contains a sugar substitute does not necessarily mean it is calorie-free or even healthy.