

LIVE WELL WORK WELL

 MORETON & COMPANY

JUNE 2017

NATURE WALKS Linked to Improved Mental Health

Group nature walks are linked to significantly lower levels of depression, less perceived stress, and enhanced mental health and well-being, according to the study conducted by the University of Michigan with partners from De Montfort University, James Hutton Institute, and Edge Hill University in the United Kingdom. The findings appear in a special issue of *Ecopsychology* titled 'Ecopsychology and Public Health'.

The study found that people who had recently experienced stressful life events, like a serious illness, death of a loved one, marital separation, or unemployment, especially seemed to see a mood boost after outdoor group walks.

"We hear people say they feel better after a walk or going outside but there haven't been many studies of this large size to support the conclusion that these behaviors actually improve your mental health and well-being," says senior author Sara Warber, M.D., associate professor of family medicine at the U-M Medical School and member of the Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation.

"Walking is an inexpensive, low risk and accessible form of exercise and it turns out that combined with nature and group settings, it may be a very powerful, under-utilized stress buster. Our findings suggest that something as simple as joining an outdoor walking group may not only improve someone's daily positive emotions but may also contribute a non-pharmacological approach to serious conditions like depression."

Researchers evaluated 1,991 participants from the Walking for Health program in England, which helps facilitate nearly 3,000 weekly walks and draws more than 70,000 regular walkers a year.

"Given the increase in mental [illness] and physical inactivity in the developed world, we are constantly exploring new, accessible ways to help people improve their long-term quality of life and well-being," Warber says.

"Group walks in local natural environments may make a potentially important contribution to public health and be beneficial in helping people cope with stress and experience improved emotions."

AVOIDING TICKS and Tick-Borne Diseases



Experts are warning that this year's tick season could be worse and more widespread than ever due to milder winters, booming mice and deer populations, and the abundant 2017 acorn crop. Unfortunately, with the projected increase of ticks, the threat of tick-borne disease, including Lyme disease, also increases.

The best way to avoid contracting a tick-borne disease is to practice proper preventive measures, which include the following:

- Wear light-colored clothing, including long-sleeved shirts and long pants when in wooded areas.
- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots when walking through forest or brush.
- Keep long hair tied back.
- Wash your body and clothing after all outdoor activities.
- Look periodically for ticks if you have been outdoors, especially if you have been in wooded areas or gardens.
- Remove ticks within 24 hours to greatly reduce the risk of contracting tick-borne disease.
- Talk with your veterinarian about tick repellent for your pet.
- Check your pet's coat if it has been in a possibly tick-infested area.

For more information on ticks and tick-borne disease, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/>

ADD VARIETY & SAVE MONEY: Shop for Seasonal Produce

The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion recommends that you consume at least two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables each day. Although this varies by age, sex, and level of physical activity, it is a good recommendation for building a healthy dietary base.

One great way to add variety to your diet and make sure you are eating enough fruits and vegetables is to look for seasonal produce. Additionally, choosing in-season produce can help save you money, as the abundance of the fruit or vegetable typically makes it less expensive.

This summer, be mindful of what fruits and vegetables are in season near you. Fruits & Veggies—More Matters is a health initiative focused on helping Americans increase fruit and vegetable consumption for better health, and they have made it easy to figure out which produce is in season. On their website you can view year-round, winter, spring, summer, and fall produce options.

To see a list of all seasonal fruits and vegetables, please visit: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/what-fruits-and-vegetables-are-in-season>



CRIMINALIZING DRUG USE

Harms, Not Helps, Users

A new study suggests that the so-called War on Drugs, which calls for stiff penalties for possession of illegal drugs, has been unsuccessful in reducing drug use and put thousands of people in jail who might be better served through drug treatment.

The researchers systematically reviewed 106 peer-reviewed studies published between Jan. 2006 and Dec. 2014 on criminalization and HIV prevention or treatment among people who use intravenous drugs.

“More than 80 percent of the studies evaluating the criminalization of drug use demonstrated worse health outcomes among those targeted by these laws and their communities at large,” says one of the study’s leaders, Stefan Baral, MD, MPH, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Bloomberg School. “The evidence that criminalization helps is weak at best and the vast majority of studies show that criminalization hurts when it comes to health, economics and society-at-large.”

According to the nonprofit Drug Policy Alliance, more than 1.5 million drug-related arrests are made every year in the United States, and the new research suggests that alternative strategies and policies need to be put in place to attempt to limit the harms associated with drug use, including infectious disease, overdose, and the inability to find employment due to a drug arrest.

For the new study, Baral and his colleagues closely analyzed 106 studies. Of those, 91 suggested that drug criminalization has a negative effect on HIV prevention and treatment, 15 suggested no association, and six suggested a beneficial effect. Baral says those in the last category only showed a small benefit and were generally methodologically weak.

Meanwhile, the United States is in the grip of an opioid epidemic. In 2015, more than 50,000 Americans died from drug overdose, the most drug deaths ever recorded in a year according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More people died from drug overdose than from car crashes or shootings. The face of the opioid crisis is also different, with more rural and white people impacted.

Those in need of drug treatment are often afraid to seek help because it might mean putting themselves at risk of arrest or incarceration. Ideally, Baral says, people who are charged with drug offenses should be connected with treatment, such as a methadone program designed to wean them off of dangerous opioids.

“We must understand that punitive laws have neither decreased the supply or the use of drugs and have caused adverse health outcomes. The current approach is not working,” Baral says. “People have addiction[s] and they have nowhere to turn. They are getting HIV and hepatitis C because they are sharing dirty needles. They end up in jail or the emergency room or worse. We are at a turning point with a massive increase in the number of people using opioids and there seems to be no end in sight.”

Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Making drug use a crime makes HIV prevention, treatment more difficult: Systematic review finds overwhelming evidence supporting negative health effects related to the so-called ‘War on Drugs.’” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/05/170515101210.htm (accessed May 19, 2017).

STAYING SAFE

While Celebrating with Fireworks

Fireworks are a staple at festivities for many Americans during the summer months. Unfortunately, many people do not realize just how dangerous fireworks and sparklers can be, which is a primary reason that injuries occur.

In honor of National Fireworks Safety Month, which occurs from June 1 to July 4, take some time to familiarize yourself with the following safety suggestions to avoid accidents when using fireworks:

- Do not shoot fireworks off if you are under the influence of alcohol.
- Always have a hose or water bucket handy.
- Keep spectators a safe distance away.
- Show children how to properly hold sparklers, how to stay far enough away from other children, and what not to do when handling sparklers.
- Never try to relight a firework that didn't properly ignite.
- Soak all firework debris in water before throwing it away.
- Do not carry fireworks in your pocket or shoot them from metal or glass containers.



An estimated 7,000 injuries were treated in hospital emergency rooms during the one-month period (June 20-July 20) surrounding the Fourth of July



Men and boys accounted for 74% of all injuries, while 40% of those injured were under the age of 15.



Sparklers and firecrackers together accounted for 40% of all injuries

JUNE RECIPE

Chicken & Veggie Salad

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 head of romaine lettuce (chopped)
- 1 red onion (thinly sliced)
- ½ cup black olives (halved)
- 2 tomatoes (seeded, chopped)
- ½ cup sunflower oil
- 1 tsp. garlic salt
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese



In a large nonstick skillet, warm the olive oil over moderate heat. Add the chicken and cook for 6 minutes per side, or until cooked through and golden brown. Remove from heat, let cool, then dice or shred the chicken. In a large salad bowl, combine the lettuce, chicken, onion, olives, and tomatoes. Add the sunflower oil and toss to coat. Add the garlic salt and Parmesan cheese, toss well and serve.

Yield: 4 Servings. Each serving provides 443 Calories, 28 g of Fat, 12 g of Carbohydrates, 5 g of Saturated Fat, 527 mg of Sodium, 7 g of Dietary Fiber, 37 g of Protein. Percentage daily values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Source: USDA

This newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional.
© 2007, 2010, 2013-2017 Zywave, Inc. All rights reserved. Designed by Chelsea Rushton of Moreton & Company