



ALEXIAN CHAT

Healthy Emotional Balance Pays Off

Do you tend to look on the sunny side, or do you see a future filled with dark, stormy skies? A growing body of research suggests that having a positive outlook can benefit our physical health. National Institute of Health funded scientists are working to better understand the links between your attitude and your body. They're finding some evidence that emotional wellness can be improved by developing certain skills.

Having a positive outlook doesn't mean you never feel negative emotions, such as sadness or anger, says Dr. Barbara L. Fredrickson, a psychologist and expert on emotional wellness at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. "All emotions—whether positive or negative—are adaptive in the right circumstances. The key seems to be finding a balance between the two," she says.

"Positive emotions expand our awareness and open us up to new ideas, so we can grow and add to our toolkit for survival," Fredrickson explains. "But people need

negative emotions to move through difficult situations and respond to them appropriately in the short term. Negative emotions can get us into trouble, though, if they're based on too much rumination about the past or excessive worry

able to hold onto positive emotions longer and appreciate the good times. Developing a sense of meaning and purpose in life—and focusing on what's important to you—also contributes to emotional wellness.



Research has found a link between an upbeat mental state and improved health, including lower blood pressure, reduced risk for heart disease, healthier weight, better blood sugar levels, and longer life. But many studies can't determine whether positive emotions lead to better health, if being healthy causes positive emotions, or if other factors are involved.

about the future, and they're not really related to what's happening in the here and now."

People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Another sign of emotional wellness is being

"While earlier research suggests and association between positive emotions and health, it doesn't reveal the underlying mechanisms," says Dr. Richard J. Davidson, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "To understand the mechanisms, I think it will be crucial to understand the underlying brain circuits."

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Healthy Emotional Balance Pays Off (continued)

By using brain imaging, Davidson and others have found that positive emotions can trigger “reward” pathways located deep within the brain, including in an area known as the ventral striatum.

“Individuals who are able to savor positive emotions have lasting activation in the ventral striatum,” Davidson says. “The longer the activation lasts, the greater his or her feelings of well-being.” Continued activation of this part of the brain has been linked to healthful changes in the body, including lower levels of a stress hormone.

Negative emotions, in contrast, can activate a brain region known as the amygdala, which plays a role in fear and anxiety. “We’ve shown that there are big differences among people in how rapidly or slowly the amygdala recovers following a threat,” Davidson says. “Those who recover more slowly may be more at risk for a variety of health conditions compared to those who recover more quickly.”

Among those who appear more resilient and better able to hold on to positive emotions are people who’ve practiced various forms of meditation. In fact, growing evidence suggests that several techniques—including meditation, cognitive therapy (a type of psychotherapy), and self-reflection (thinking about the things you find important)—can help people develop the skills needed to make positive, healthful changes.

Fredrickson and her colleagues are also studying meditation. They found that after 6 weeks of training in compassion and kindness meditation, people reported increased positive emotions and social connectedness compared to an untrained group. The meditation group also had improved functioning in a nerve that helps to control heart rate. “The results suggest that taking time to learn the skills



Dr. Richard Davidson

to self-generate positive emotions can help us become healthier, more social, more resilient versions of ourselves,” Fredrickson says.

Dr. Emily Falk, a neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania, is taking a different approach. Falk is exploring how self-affirmation—that is, thinking about

Sometimes people think that emotions just happen, like the weather. But we have some control over the emotions we experience.

what’s most important to you—can affect your brain and lead to positive, healthful behaviors. Her team found that when people are asked to think about things that they find meaningful, a brain region that recognizes personally relevant information becomes activated. This brain activity can change how people respond to health advice.

This type of self-affirmation, Falk’s research shows, can help physically inactive “couch potatoes” get more active. In a recent study, inactive adults received typical health advice about the importance of moving more and sitting less. But before the advice, about half of the participants were asked to think about things that they value most.

The “self-affirmation” group became more physically active during the month-long study period that followed compared to the group that hadn’t engaged in self-affirmation. “The study shows one way that we can open the brain to positive change and help people achieve their goals,” Falk says.

As mounting research suggests, having a positive mindset might help to improve your physical health as well.

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Myths of Aging

Many of us grew up hearing and seeing things that didn't make old age a very exciting time in life to look forward to. Perhaps we had older relatives who were "old before their time" or were "stuck in their ways." Fortunately, times have changed and today's seniors are healthier and more engaged in the world.

Here are some of the common myths about growing old and the reasons why we shouldn't believe them:

Myth: To be old is to be sick.

Fact: Even in advanced old age, most people are not disabled, and the proportion of older Americans who are disabled is going down, not up. Only a small percentage of older people live in nursing homes; the remainder live in the community at large. Myth: Older adults are more depressed than younger adults.

Fact: Depression occurs more commonly in people who have medical problems. Some older people have more medical conditions than younger people do, so it may seem as if more older people are depressed.

Older adults who do face depression are finding that it doesn't carry the same stigma that it did years ago. In fact, many well-respected people like the newsman Mike Wallace have found helpful treatment for their depression. They've also spread the word that depression—and treatment for it—are not things to be ashamed of.

Myth: Sex stops after 65.

Fact: Sexual activity does not have to stop once someone gets older. Researchers at Duke University's Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development surveyed 254 men and women between the ages of 60 and 94 about their sexual activity. They found that these older individuals were still interested in sex and continued to have active sex lives.



Myth: You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Fact: As we age, we may not be able to learn new things as quickly as we did when we were younger. However, learning is a life-long process. Three things that are good for our

minds as we age are regular physical activity, a strong social support system, and a belief in our own ability to handle what life has to offer.

Myth: Older adults don't pull their own weight.

Fact: One-third of older people work for pay. One-third work as volunteers in churches, hospitals, and other organizations. Many others provide much-needed assistance to family members, friends, and neighbors.

Myth: It's too late or it's pointless to change bad habits in later life.

Fact: Certainly, it's better to start healthy habits early, but the truth is, it's almost never too late to benefit from healthy living. Even damage from decades of too much alcohol or fat-laden food, lack of exercise, or smoking can be reversed or limited. A fresh start can help a person recover lost abilities and decrease the risk of certain illnesses. In some cases, it can even improve a person's health.

Myth: Mental sharpness declines with age.

Fact: An active mind and clear thoughts go hand in hand. Reading, doing puzzles, and taking classes are excellent ways to challenge our brains. Writing to friends and hobbies like knitting and woodworking are also good for our minds.

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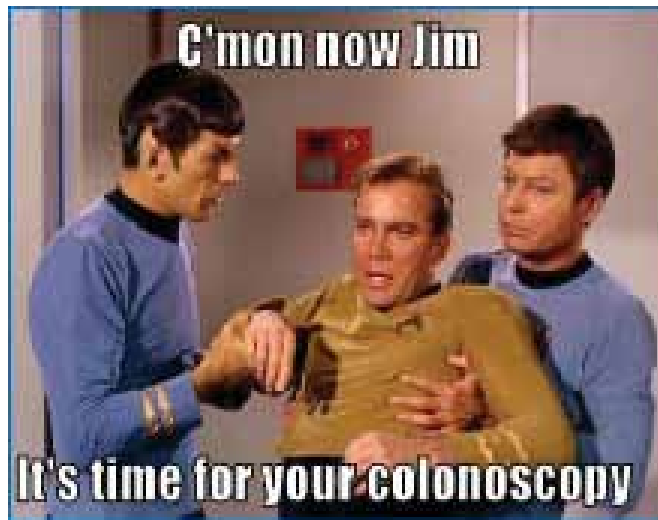
While turning 50 may be the new 30, it also comes with its own challenges, unlike any other age — be it mental, emotional, or physical. This is also the time your doctor will likely start urging you to get a colonoscopy, even if you do not have a history or any symptoms.

However, what used to be a dreaded, albeit necessary and routine procedure like its traditional counterpart, the virtual colonoscopy requires drinking a laxative 24 hours prior to the procedure. Unlike the traditional colonoscopy, which involves a long camera-tipped tube, the virtual exam inserts only about a two-inch soft tube that sends small puffs of gas to fill the colon so that a low-radiation dose computer-assisted CT or “CAT” scan can produce two- and three-dimensional views of the colon.

The entire procedure takes about 15 to 20 minutes, so no anesthetic is needed and you can return to daily activities immediately.

“It’s very good in screening and the patient’s downtime is less,” Dr. Guy Barat, a radiologist at Community Hospital in New Port Richey, Florida, told

the St. Petersburg Times in an interview. Some traditionalists say that you would still need a traditional colonoscopy to remove anything using this new technology. However, the vast majority of exams don’t find anything wrong and the virtual test has been shown to dramatically increase screening



rates. Still not convinced? The virtual colonoscopy has the seal of approval from the American Cancer Society as a recommended screening exam, and even President Obama opted for a virtual colonoscopy over the standard test.

Experts say that the new technology can detect polyps the size of small blueberries, as well as cancer and other diseases. For the more than 140,000 Americans who are diagnosed with colorectal cancer every year, with nearly 50,000 dying largely due to late detection, this screening is vital.

The exam has been FDA-approved since 1995 and major insurers including Cigna, United Healthcare, Unicare, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and others now cover their members for virtual colonoscopies to screen for colon cancer.

The American College of Radiology (ACR) says the last obstacle to tackle is to somehow get Medicare to cover beneficiaries for this life-saving exam so that seniors can have the same screening alternative as those with private insurance.

Currently, the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) is examining virtual colonoscopies. A “passing” grade from the USPSTF could lead directly to Medicare coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

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10 Symptoms of Fibromyalgia

Pain

Some people complain of constant stabbing pain throughout their entire body, while others experience a duller form of continuous aching.

Sensitivity to Touch

Hyperesthesia describes an increased sensitivity to the sensory input of touch; for example, being under a light blanket may make you feel as though you're trapped under a heavy lead weight. Hyperalgesia, on the other hand, describes an increase in pain sensation; for instance, you might stub your toe on a table leg, only to feel an excruciating and throbbing pain for hours or days afterwards.

Environmental Sensitivity

A person with fibromyalgia may be extremely sensitive to cigarette smoke, or feel nauseous upon stepping into a freshly painted room. Chemical-based cleaning products also seem to trigger these types of sensitivities. Sounds and light even in moderation can seem extremely loud and bright, and can even cause headaches and other extreme reactions.

Muscle & Joint Stiffness

People with fibromyalgia develop muscle and joint stiffness for no immediately apparent reason; a stiffness can be generalized throughout the body, or it might affect one or more localized muscle or joint groups.

Muscle Spasms

Fibromyalgia patients tend to experience extreme spasms, even after medical investigations uncover no root physical cause of the problem. Muscles seem to go into spasms spontaneously; sometimes, one or more specific muscles are affected again and again.

Exhaustion

Fibromyalgia syndrome itself seems to drain patients of energy, even if they aren't overexerting themselves physically or mentally and may be exacerbated or even caused by sleep disturbances. The pain and muscle spasms caused by fibromyalgia cause most sufferers to lose sleep.

Trouble Concentrating

What is known is that the patient's short-term memory can be noticeably compromised. Patients have a hard time

retaining information, recalling newly learned facts and skills and tend to find it very difficult to sustain concentration for an extended period of time.

Chronic Headaches

It is also common for headache pain to seem to extend further down the body, into the neck, shoulders and even the upper back. In some cases, fibromyalgia headache pain can be strong enough to cause ongoing sleep disturbances.

Bowel Troubles

Fibromyalgia can also cause irritable bowel syndrome. Over time, matters become more difficult to clear, which can lead to reliance on and overuse of laxatives, which itself can cause further complications.

Depression

In all likelihood, depression results from having to deal with constant pain, loss of sleep, lack of energy, and being forced to give up activities the patient once enjoyed. Researchers aren't sure whether the proverbial chicken or the proverbial egg comes first. The good news is that fibromyalgia seems to respond well to certain antidepressants.

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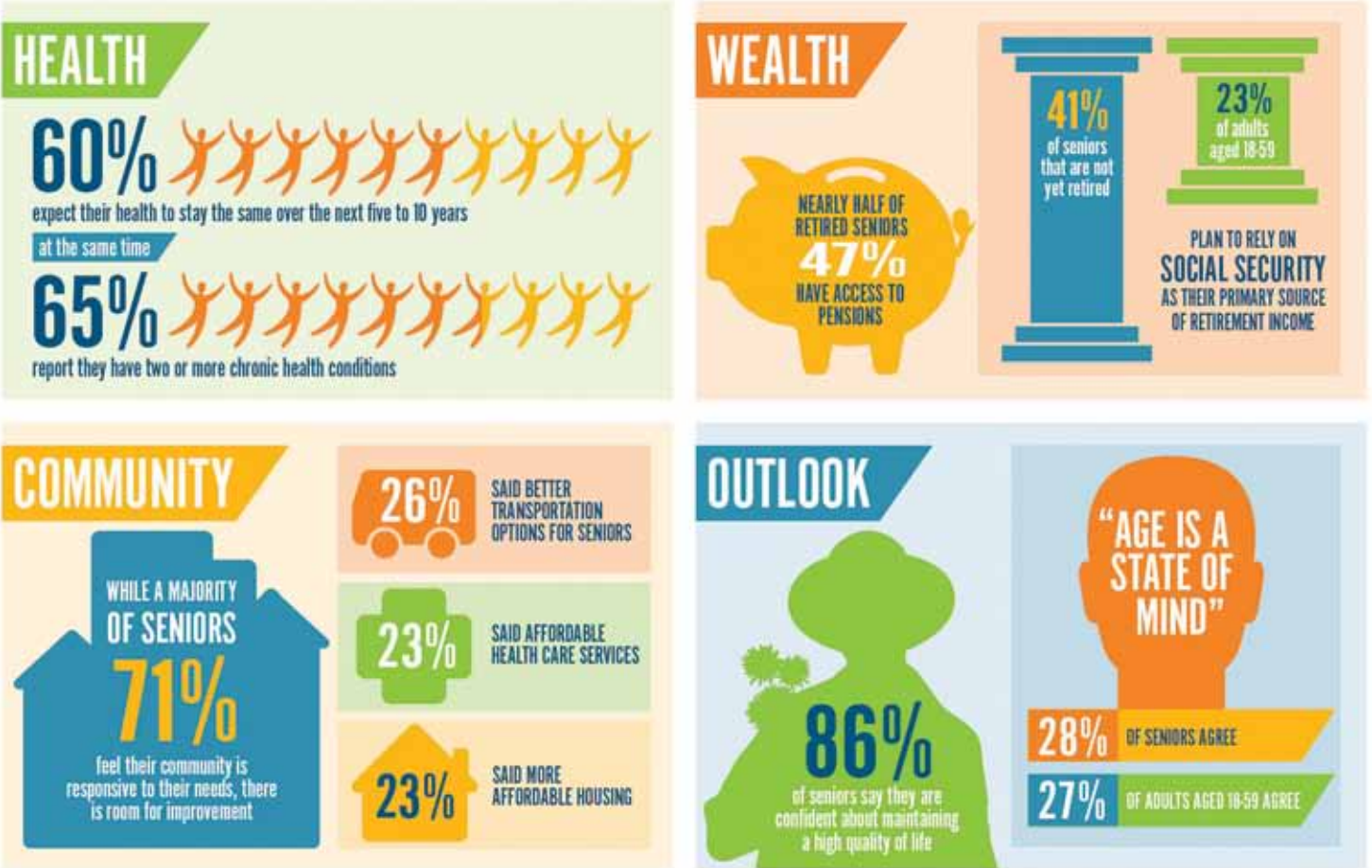
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WHAT MATTERS MOST TO SENIORS IN THE UNITED STATES?



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A Walkthrough for Cataract Surgery

Cataract surgery, usually an outpatient procedure, takes an hour or less to perform.

First, your doctor will place eye drops in your eye to dilate your pupil. You'll receive local anesthetics to numb the area, and you may be given a sedative to help you relax. If you're given a sedative, you may remain awake but groggy during surgery.

During cataract surgery, the clouded lens is removed, and a clear artificial lens is usually implanted. In some cases, however, a cataract may be removed without implanting an artificial lens.

Surgical methods used to remove cataracts include:

Using an ultrasound probe to break up the lens for removal. During a procedure called phacoemulsification (fak-o-e-mul-sih-fih-KAY-shun), your surgeon makes a tiny incision in the front of your eye (cornea) and inserts a needle-thin probe into the lens substance where the cataract has formed.

Your surgeon then uses the probe, which transmits ultrasound waves, to break up (emulsify) the cataract and suction out the fragments. Stitches may or may not be used to close the tiny incision in your cornea at the completion of the procedure.

Making an incision in the eye and removing the lens. A less frequently used procedure called extracapsular cataract extraction requires a larger incision than

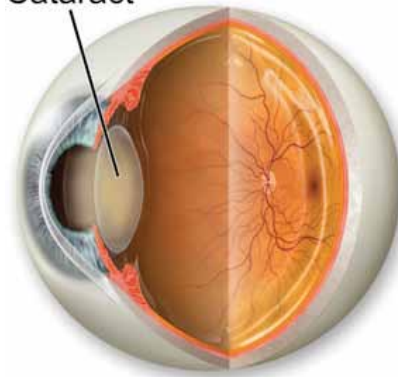
that used for phacoemulsification.

Through this larger incision your surgeon uses surgical tools to remove the front capsule of the lens and the cloudy portion of your lens comprising the cataract.

The very back capsule of your lens is left in place to serve as a place for the artificial lens to rest.

This procedure may be performed if you have certain eye complications. With its larger incision, stitches are required to

Cataract



close the incision.

Once the cataract has been removed by either phacoemulsification or extracapsular extraction, a clear artificial lens is implanted into the empty lens capsule.

This implant, known as an intraocular lens (IOL), is made of plastic, acrylic or silicone. You won't be able to see

or feel the lens. It requires no care and becomes a permanent part of your eye.

A variety of IOLs with different features are available. Discuss the benefits and risks of the different types of IOLs with your eye surgeon to determine what's best for you.

After cataract surgery, expect your vision to begin improving within a few days.

Your vision may be blurry at first as your eye heals and adjusts.

You'll usually see your eye doctor a day or two after your surgery, the following week, and then again after about a month to monitor healing.

It's normal to feel itching and mild discomfort for a couple of days after surgery. Avoid rubbing or pushing on your eye. Your doctor may ask you to wear an eye patch or protective shield the day of surgery and a few days after.

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following: Vision loss, Pain that persists despite the use of over-the-counter pain medications, Increased eye redness, Light flashes or multiple new spots (floaters) in front of your eye, Nausea, vomiting or excessive coughing.

Your doctor will let you know when your eyes have healed enough for you to get a final prescription for eyeglasses.

If you have cataracts in both eyes, your doctor usually schedules a second surgery a month or two later to remove the cataract in your other eye.

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Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

How do you know if you are getting enough sleep? As we age, our sleep patterns and needs change. Because of this, it is important to become educated about sleep, your body's needs and common sleep disorders.

Scientists describe sleep as "a complex process of restoration and renewal of the body." This process is made up of two stages of sleep, rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM).

REM sleep is characterized as complete inactivity of the voluntary muscles in the body, with the exception of the muscles that control eye movements. NREM sleep is divided into three stages.

- Stage N1 sleep is the lightest stage of sleep.
- Stage N2 sleep is a true sleep state and accounts for 40-50% of sleep time.
- Stage N3 is called deep sleep.



As you may have noticed, sleep typically occurs in cycles of 90 to 120 minutes. The National Institute of Health suggests that average adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. However, this often varies as we age.

So, how do you know how much sleep your body needs? The bottom line is, if you do not get enough, you will know.

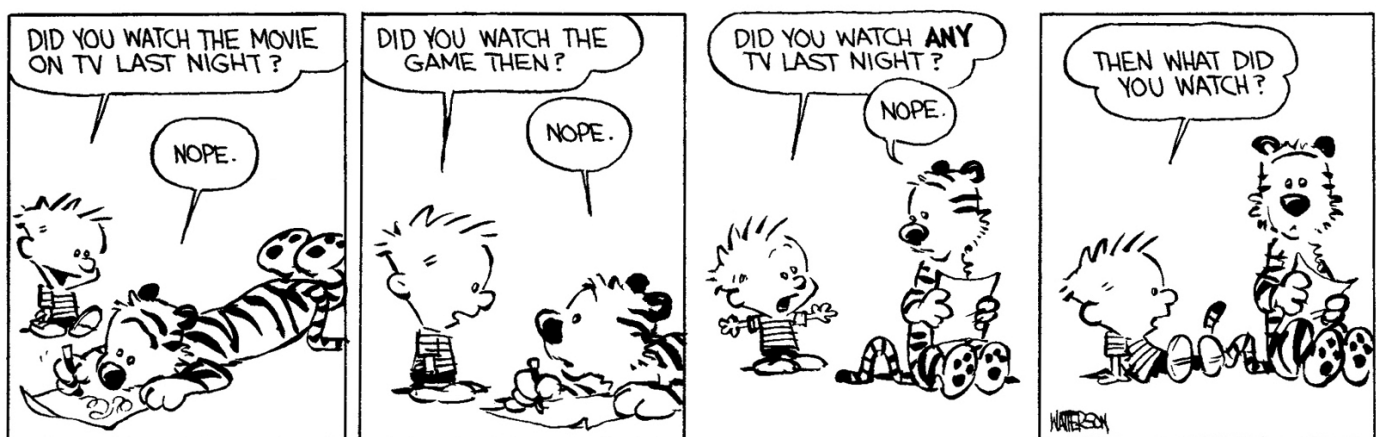
Sleep deprivation can result in fatigue, daytime sleepiness, even weight loss or weight gain. This lack of sleep can adversely affect your brain and how well you think. Sleep deprivation can be very serious, but it is not considered a sleep disorder.

Sleep disorders are characterized by disruptions of the sleep cycle. About

40 million Americans suffer from one or more sleep disorders. The most common types are insomnia, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome and narcolepsy.

If you believe you may be experiencing a sleep disorder, alert your doctor as soon as possible. There are many solutions available, and most likely, you will soon be enjoying a good night's sleep.

www.medicinenet.com



Allergy Season Survival Hints



Spring is here and with it comes allergies. The Asthma and Allergy foundation of America has released their annual list of the “most challenging places to live with spring allergies” and Chattanooga, Tennessee has earned the number seven slot in the highest spring allergy capitals of 2013.

There are things you can do to help enjoy this season without allergy symptoms. Rest assured, Doctor Oz, from the Dr. Oz show has provided some allergy survival strategies found to be extremely helpful:

- Stay cool with cool eye compresses.
- Be a star and wear big sunglasses to block pollen entry into your eyes and eyelids.
- Rinse wisely by washing your eyelids gently when you wash your face each morning. Shampoo your hair

in the evening to remove and wash away unwanted seasonal pollens and molds.

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to prevent pollens from landing on top of your head.
- Do not use hair gel and similar hair-care products which can act as “pollen magnets” during the height of allergy season.
- Avoid the pollen problem by exercising indoors on very high-pollen days.
- Plan ahead and find the pollen count in your area by going to www.aaaai.org/nab.
- Wear a pollen mask, use gloves, and avoid touching your eyes and face.
- Never line dry clothing outdoors on high-pollen days.
- Avoid certain plants and flowers which will aggravate your allergy symptoms.
- Try to make an allergy-friendly garden by planting gladiolus, periwinkle, begonia, bougainvillea, iris and orchid.
- Start your allergy treatment early by seeing your allergist for a few simple, quick, but very reliable allergy tests.
- Get an allergy injection, the only immune system treatment which can actually prevent the progression of your allergies.
- Medications can work. Some effective and safe choices for your relief include: over the counter nasal saline sprays/rinses, prescription nasal steroid and antihistamines, oral antihistamines, leukotriene blockers, and allergy eye drops.
- When driving, keep windows closed and set the air conditioner on “re-circulate” to keep out the pollens. Clean filters in air conditioners frequently during allergy season to get the best efficiency.
- Avoid window fans.
- Avoid Cross-Reactions. As many as 1 in 3 seasonal allergy sufferers may experience “oral allergy syndrome” (tingling of the mouth or itchy throat) after ingesting certain foods (apples, pears, carrots, celery, peaches, cherries, as well as almonds and hazelnuts).

We hope you will go out and enjoy the great outdoors this season with these easy, convenient and proven ways to stay allergy-free.

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Poetry Sampler

Many times I've heard it said
"You can't go home again"
This cryptic line intrigued me
thus my quest for home began

My birth in Oklahoma,
just the place to start me search
but hennaed soil and fire ants
weren't a roost I'd pick to perch

Wichita, my Kansas home,
on the crooked road called life,
shoveling coal dust storms, and snow
those days seemed filled with strife.

The sun shone bright in Texas
Austin welcomed us that spring
two years, initiation
then Houston's call did sting

Then war's interruption
people's lives were all askew
I worked for the navy
Houston years were only two

But this was the city
tho' I met my husband there
Marriage had a long long wait
War, first would take its share

The folks then moved to San Antone
right next to a railroad track
worked for Braniff Airlines
a fun job, when I look back

Memories and marriage vows
still dwell on this frontier
surely this must be the spot
mom and dad are buried here

Still the years in Wisconsin
gave me roots implanted deep
the pain, love and joy I feel
reminiscences, I'll keep

Seems home is all these places
where I've lived and loved and cried
remnants stay in each of them
for it's there I still abide

So, I guess the man was
"you can't go home again"
until you take
some sage advice
Look --- within, within, within



Matriarch?

I am now the matriarch
in my family
everybody thinks I'm wise
I'm dumb as I can be

They ask me all these questions
about life's mysteries
but who am I to tell them
those things they cannot see?

All the years it took to learn
stuff I still don't know
it fills me with great pleasure
for 'kin' to think it's so.

A Little and a Lot

It takes a little music
to brighten up your day
it takes a little sunshine
to chase the clouds away

It takes a tiny baby
to bring a smile or two
it takes those frolicking kids at play
to think your home's a zoo

It takes a heap of lovin'
to wipe away the tears
it takes a lot of livin'
to total up the years

It takes some heavy thinkin'
to know which path to take
is it left or is it right
which one is a mistake?

It takes a prayer to guide you
thru times of stress and strife
God had some sense of humor
when he created life.



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