



HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWS

Staying safe on the road



Texting while driving is a dangerous activity that can lead to serious accidents. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in 2021. According to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute, cell phone usage can reduce a driver’s attention by as much as 37%. Texting is the most alarming distraction, as it can take your eyes off the road for five seconds.

At 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed. The average driver is two to nine times more likely to be in an accident if they are texting while driving. Handheld cell phone use (including texting) tends to be highest among 16- to 24-year-old drivers. Furthermore, if you’re caught texting and driving, you risk getting a ticket and potentially raising your car insurance rates.

To ensure traffic safety, it is important to avoid texting while driving. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing. If you need to send a text message or make a call, pull over to a safe location and park your car before doing so. You cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has your full attention.

Sources: “Understanding the Problem” and “Distracted Driving” by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute. “Cell phone usage reduces a driver’s attention by as much as 37%.” ■

March is colorectal cancer awareness month

The colon and rectum are part of the digestive system. Colorectal cancer occurs when small growths called polyps form on the inner walls and grow into cancer. Men and women need to get tested for colorectal cancer starting at age 45 even if they feel healthy. Most people with polyps — and most people with colorectal cancer — have no symptoms. If polyps are found early then they can be removed before they become cancer.

Screening can find signs of potential colorectal cancer before symptoms appear and the cancer develops into a life-threatening situation. Testing is recommended because according to the American Cancer Society American Indians and Alaska Natives have some of the highest disease and death rates in the United States. If it has been longer than 10 years since your last colonoscopy or one year from your last rapid fecal test (FIT) it is time to do another screening test. Nine out of 10 people survive colorectal cancer when testing happens early and treatment can begin. Only 1 in 10 people survive if CRC is identified and treated in the late stage.

Early detection and treatment for colorectal cancer is highly effective! Ask your doctor about getting a screening test. ■

COLORECTAL CANCER CAN BE PREVENTED

1 in 24
people in the United States will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in their lifetime

53,000
people in the United States will die from colorectal cancer this year

Take control of your health.

Get tested today!

What is colorectal cancer?	When should I get tested?	How do I get tested?
<p>The colon and rectum are part of the digestive system. Colorectal cancer occurs when small growths called polyps form on the inner walls and grow into cancer.</p> <p>Most people with polyps — and most people with colorectal cancer — have no symptoms. If polyps are found early, they can be removed, before they become cancer.</p>	<p>Men and women need to get tested for colorectal cancer starting at age 45 even if they feel healthy.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #0070C0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Complete the test today. It could save your life!</p> </div> <p>Getting tests on time can prevent colorectal cancer or find early forms of cancer that can be treated.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>EARLY STAGE 9 OUT OF 10 SURVIVE</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>LATE STAGE 1 OUT OF 10 SURVIVE</p> </div> </div>	<p>You have options! You can complete a colonoscopy or a FIT.</p> <p>A colonoscopy is an exam that checks for problems in your colon. Your provider inserts a flexible, lighted tube into your rectum to look for polyps which can be removed to prevent colorectal cancer.</p> <p>A FIT is a simple at-home test that looks for hidden blood in your stool (poop). If blood is found, your doctor will recommend a follow-up colonoscopy.</p>

SOURCE: American Cancer Society

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Social media changing brain function

Studies are showing that social media is changing our brain function in key areas:

Memory — Social media can affect what is remembered, how it is remembered and how much is remembered. New research shows that as we document our experiences and thoughts on social media, we may actually reduce our memory of those events and experiences.

Some scientists believe social media may change how our brain compartmentalizes and stores information. Since we think we know where we can find the digital information our brains don’t seem to keep as many details about the event stored in our own memory.

Attention capacity — With heavy use of social media our brains are constantly being stimulated.

Our brains multi-task. This can create changes in the neurological architecture of our brain. Social media offers the constant promise of new information. This new content is regularly competing for our attention. The current belief is that with this stimuli we are less able to ignore distraction. Therefore, we have poor mental performance. Heavy social media use has even been shown to shrink parts of the

brain that help us concentrate.

Social and emotional response — Social media is made to be addictive. Our brains get a hit of dopamine with each like or positive comment. The little feel-good rewards rewires our brain to do whatever it takes to get another dopamine release so we post more. This can lead to social media addiction.

Mental health — The absence of likes and comments on our posts can leave us feeling empty, sad, anxious or depressed because our brain isn’t getting that hit of dopamine.

Social media users tend to compare their lives to those they see online, leading to questions of their self-worth. They repeatedly question their importance to their “friends”. Do they measure up? Are they valuable in their friends’ eyes? Due to the nature of social media, comparisons can happen much faster than they would occur in real-life social interactions. ■

Understanding strokes and how they happen

A stroke happens when blood flow to a part of your brain is cut off. Strokes are classified as “ischemic” where a blood vessel that takes blood to your brain gets blocked and “hemorrhagic.” Blood vessels can get blocked when fatty deposits in your arteries break off and travel to the brain. Sometimes poor blood flow, due to an irregular heartbeat, can form a blood clot which travels to the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes occur when a blood vessel in your brain bursts or leaks.

High blood pressure and certain blood-thinning medicines can lead to this kind of stroke.

What can you do to lower your chance of getting a stroke?

High blood pressure is the biggest cause of strokes. If you have been prescribed medicine for this, be sure to take it regularly. Even though you may feel fine, uncontrolled blood pressure is not your friend. Smoking or chewing tobacco raises your odds of a stroke. Nicotine makes your blood pressure increase and cigarette smoke causes fatty buildup in your neck artery. Heart disease, including defective heart valves or an irregular heartbeat (atrial fibrillation), can lead to strokes. High blood pressure, chronic high blood sugar, and being overweight are common in people with diabetes and raises the chance of a stroke. High cholesterol also creates higher risk.

Identify stroke symptoms and act FAST:

- F**ace: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of their face droop?
- A**rms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- S**peech: Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?
- T**ime: If you notice any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Other common stroke symptoms include confusion, sudden vision or walking problems or severe headaches. ■

STROKE SYMPTOMS
Remember, recognize and act fast

F
Face drooping

A
Arm weakness

S
Speech difficulties

T
Time to call