

Allergy Prevention

Tips for avoiding pollen

If you have seasonal allergies, you may be able to find the pollen count in your area on the National Allergy Bureau Web site or in your local newspaper.

When pollen counts are high, you may want to:

- Reschedule or limit outdoor activities (especially on windy days), or use other precautions such as wearing a mask, keeping doors and windows closed, and using air conditioning (swamp coolers and attic fans are not recommended).

- When you drive, keep your car windows rolled up, to keep pollen out.

- Wash off after being outdoors (especially your face and hands), change your clothes, and rinse your nostrils with saline nose spray. Be sure to bathe and wash your hair before going to bed on days where you have been outdoors a lot.



- Vacuum carpets and upholstered surfaces weekly.

- Avoid yard work (raking, mowing), or at least wear a mask. Yard work can stir up pollen (as well as mold).

- Wash and keep pets outside, or at least out of the bedroom.

- Avoid smoking and exposure to smoke, sprays, room deodorizers, perfumes, and other irritating substances. Get tools, tips, and information to help you quit smoking.

- Clean bathroom and kitchen surfaces often with a commercial cleanser containing bleach to reduce mold growth.

If avoiding allergy triggers does not relieve your symptoms, treatment with medications may be your next step. When using allergy medications, keep in mind that:

- Many nonprescription antihistamines and decongestants can be as effective as prescription

medicines and have the advantage of not requiring a doctor's visit.

- If your symptoms don't improve with over-the-counter medications and are particularly bothersome, make an appointment with your doctor. Allergy symptoms can mask—or trigger—more serious chronic conditions such as asthma and sinus infections.

—KAISERHEALTHNEWS

Financial Counseling

Studies show American workers badly need financial help. But they're not sure where to turn.

Effective financial counseling helps you make better day-to-day decisions, and, as a result, you have more to save and invest.



Nearly everyone can benefit from talking to a financial counselor. People that turn to financial counselors for a wide range of reasons, including the purchase of a new home, the birth of a child, unemployment, illness or accident, the death of a breadwinner, separation or divorce, general debt management issues, and many other situations. But you don't have to be facing a crisis to use this resource. Chances are, you might just need some help clarifying your monthly budget and identifying here you can make improvements in your spending habits. A financial counselor is one of the best decisions you can make for yourself and your family; consider contacting one today, through HBA, 1-800-937-7770.

—EMPLOYEE BENEFIT NEWS

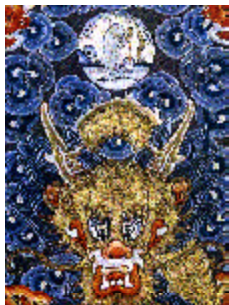
Lower Your Breast Cancer Risk

- **Cut the fat**
- **Stay Active**
- **Limit alcohol if you drink**
- **Keep screening, monthly self-exams, -see your health care provider regularly, and find out when to start and how often to have a mammogram.**

Myths about addiction

1. Addicts are bad, crazy, or stupid.

Evolving research is demonstrating that addicts are not bad people who need to get good, crazy people who need to get sane, or stupid people who need education. Addicts have a brain disease that goes beyond their use of drugs.



2. Addiction is a willpower problem.

This is an old belief, probably based upon wanting to blame addicts for using drugs to excess. This myth is reinforced by the observation that most treatments for alcoholism and addiction are behavioral (talk) therapies, which are perceived to build self-control. But addiction occurs in an area of the brain called the mesolimbic dopamine system that is not under conscious control.

3. Addicts should be punished, not treated, for using drugs. Science is demonstrating that addicts have a brain disease that causes them to have impaired control over their use of drugs. Addicts need treatment for their neurochemically driven brain pathology.

4. People addicted to one drug are addicted to all drugs. While this sometimes occurs, most people who are dependent on a drug may be dependent on one or two drugs, but not all. This is probably due to how each drug “matches up” with the person’s brain chemistry.

5. Addicts cannot be treated with medications. Actually, addicts are medically detoxified in hospitals, when appropriate, all the time. But can they be treated with medications after detox? New pharmacotherapies (medicines) are being developed to help patients who have

already become abstinent to further curb their craving for addicting drugs. These medications reduce the chances of relapse and enhance the effectiveness of existing behavioral (talk) therapies.

6. Addiction is treated behaviorally, so it must be a behavioral problem.

New brain scan studies are showing that behavioral treatments (i.e., psychotherapy) and medications work similarly in changing brain function. So addiction is a brain disease that can be treated by changing brain function, through several types of treatments.

7. Alcoholics can stop drinking simply by attending AA meetings, so they can’t have a brain disease.

The key word here is “simply.” For most people, AA is a tough, lifelong working of the Twelve Steps. On the basis of research, we know that this support system of people with a common experience is one of the active ingredients of recovery in AA. AA doesn’t work for everyone, even for many people who truly want to stop drinking.

* ADAPTED FROM MYTHS OF ADDICTION. CARLTON K. ERICKSON, PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ADDICTION SCIENCE

*April comes like an idiot,
babbling and strewing flowers.*

—EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY



NATIONAL
POETRY
MONTH & APRIL

Writing Your Own Poetry for Your Mental Health

Poetry is a means of expressing our inner selves, our thoughts and our feelings. Writing poetry is a way to get our feelings out.

Writing Exercise:

I AM

I am (two special characteristics you have).

I wonder (something you are actually curious about).

I hear (an imaginary sound).

I see (an imaginary sight).

I want (an actual desire).

I am (the first line of the poem repeated).

I pretend (something you actually pretend to do).

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary).

I touch (an imaginary touch).

I worry (something that really bothers you).

I cry (something that makes you very sad).

I am (the first line of the poem repeated).

I understand (something you now is true).

I say (something you believe in).

I dream (something you actually dream about).

I try (something you really make an effort about).

I hope (something you actually hope for).

I am (the first line of the poem repeated).

—BY SUZI MEE & —PATTY FLEENER M.S.W.