

inspire

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE

ECOTHERAPY: Walk Away From Your Worries

HEALTH TIPS FOR
NAILS, SKIN AND SUN

**SHAKING SODIUM
OUT OF YOUR DIET**



IF YOUR **Nails** COULD TALK

It's normal to clip the occasional hangnail or catch your fingertip in a door. However, you should keep an eye out for the following nail symptoms that could point to more serious medical conditions:

- **Darkened cuticles and colored streaks** that develop on nails are called Hutchinson's nail sign. They can indicate that you have melanoma, the most aggressive form of skin cancer.
- **Splinter hemorrhages** are red streaks in the nail bed and may signal an infected heart valve, especially if you haven't injured your nail recently.
- Heart conditions and lung diseases can cause **clubbing of the fingernails**. Clubbing symptoms include softening of the nail beds, bulging fingertips and increased nail curvature.
- **Brittle nails** and nails that split away from the skin can be signs of an underactive or overactive thyroid. They can also signal the development of psoriasis, a skin disease that causes redness and irritation.

If your nails exhibit any of these signs or if they don't look normal to you, don't hesitate to contact your medical provider.

Source: National Library of Medicine

Know Your **ABCDEs**

Detecting skin cancer doesn't require a complicated screening or exam. One of the best ways to detect melanoma early is by checking your skin once a month for one or more of these features:

- **ASYMMETRY** — The mole or birthmark has mismatched parts.
 - **BORDER** — The edges of the spot are blurred, notched, jagged or irregular.
 - **COLOR** — The color changes throughout the mole and may contain shades of brown, black, and — less frequently — white, red, pink or blue.
 - **DIAMETER** — The mole or birthmark is wider than a quarter of an inch.
 - **EVOLVING** — The color, size or shape of the spot changes over time.
- Use both a full-length mirror and a hand-held mirror to check your entire body, including areas that are difficult to see. Ask your doctor about any concerning developments.

Source: American Cancer Society



Make an appointment today with one of our caring staff at Big Bend Regional Health Center by visiting BigBendAnytime.com.

Sun PROTECTION



Protect your eyes and skin from sun damage all year round by:

applying sunscreen with an sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or greater to all exposed skin areas

wearing sunglasses that block 99 percent or more of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays



dressing in clothes that cover more of your skin, especially if their labels display a UV protection factor (UPF) of 30 or higher

choosing hats with brims that are at least three inches wide



Source: Skin Cancer Foundation



FUEL FOR TWO

Making pregnancy-safe changes to your diet before you are expecting helps ensure your baby is protected from potentially harmful chemicals and receives the best possible nutrition from day one.

Your baby achieves important developmental milestones, including formation of the neural tube that goes on to form the brain and spinal cord, during the first four to eight weeks of pregnancy — many times, before you even realize you're pregnant. The foods you eat or avoid during this time play vital roles in aiding proper growth and development, which is why providers recommend adjusting your diet as soon as you start thinking about becoming pregnant.

Use these do's and don'ts to guide your healthy eating habits before and after pregnancy:

- ✓ **Do take 400 to 800 micrograms of folic acid every day.** Supplementing your diet with folic acid before and during pregnancy helps prevent certain birth defects, including neural tube defects, according to the March of Dimes.
- ✗ **Don't drink alcohol.** Everything you eat or drink is passed onto your baby, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that no known level of alcohol is safe for baby during pregnancy.
- ✓ **Do limit your caffeine consumption.** Every day, aim for no more than 200mg — about one tall latte, one 12-ounce cup of coffee or two 12-ounce colas.
- ✗ **Don't treat pregnancy as a license to overeat.** You'll only need about 300 extra calories per day during the second and third trimesters to support your growing baby.
- ✓ **Do talk with your provider about other healthy eating tips, such as foods to avoid.** For example, pregnant women shouldn't eat raw foods, such as sushi.



Big Bend Regional Health Clinic is here for you. Roane McLaughlin, M.D., OB-GYN, Ekta Escovar, M.D., Pediatrician, and John Ray, M.D., Family Medicine Physician, provide comprehensive care for you and your baby. Call for an appointment today at (432) 214-8282.

Drs. Ray, McLaughlin and Escovar are members of the medical staff at Big Bend Regional Medical Center.

Fast Fact

Adjusting your diet is just one step in your preconception journey. Maximizing your health by losing weight, quitting smoking and working with your doctor to control existing medical conditions also helps ensure good health for you and your precious cargo.

FREE PRENATAL CLASSES

Big Bend Regional Health Center provides a free three-class prenatal course held one Saturday each month.

Class 1: April, July, October
John Ray, M.D., presents Pregnancy Basics.

Class 2: May, August, November
Roane McLaughlin, M.D., OB-GYN, presents Labor and Delivery.

Class 3: June, September, December
Ekta Escovar, M.D., Pediatrician, presents Newborn Care 101.

Classes are offered every quarter. Catch any you miss the next quarter.

Snacks will be provided.

If you are expecting, take advantage of this free course offered by BBRHC and RSVP today. Call (432) 214-8282.

OUTDOOR Rx

Whether you prefer exercising outdoors, meditating in a natural setting or simply working in your garden, ecotherapy — healing time spent in the natural world — offers something for everyone.

In the 1980s, Harvard University biologist Edward O. Wilson, PhD, presented a concept called “biophilia” in which he argued that humans have an innate love of and connection to nature. Today, scientific research shows that connection has numerous positive effects on our health.

A slightly unconventional practice called ecotherapy is becoming more commonly used as part of mental health treatment in the United States. Used to treat many conditions, including depression and anxiety, ecotherapy works to address a wide variety of stressors through outdoor activities including adventure therapy, meditating in nature, working in gardens and on farms, playing with animals and getting involved in conservation activities.

CALL OF THE WILD

Have you ever been sitting at your desk at work and noticed you felt completely unable to focus? Next time that happens, try taking a walk outside. Even a brief period spent experiencing the sights and sounds of plants and animals improves your ability to concentrate and renews your reserves of patience.

This phenomenon of directed attention fatigue is similar to attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), present in both children and adults. While spending time in natural environments benefits

everyone, researchers believe people with ADHD may especially see results.

LEAVE YOUR TROUBLES OUTSIDE

Approximately 85 percent of Americans don’t have access to forests, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, but everyone can reap the benefits of being in nature. Spending time in a park or garden, or strolling down a sidewalk lined with trees, provides some of the same benefits as walking through a traditional forest — inner calm and feelings of well-being.

About 350 million people suffer from depression worldwide. Treatment options for most are psychotherapy, medication or a combination of both. Ecotherapy is a treatment option that most people can access at little to no cost.

Researchers at the University of Essex found a walk in a park improved feelings of depression in about three-fourths of participants, and 90 percent felt a higher level of esteem.

Ready to take a walk for better health? Talk with your doctor about the potential benefit of getting outside and enjoying green spaces.



MORE MELATONIN

When you were younger, did your parents ever send you outside to run around and exhaust yourself? Apparently, they were on the right track. This approach works for adults, too, but it isn't just the exercise that makes you sleep better at night.

Experiencing natural light and its fluctuations prompts your body to produce melatonin, a hormone that helps your body maintain a healthy sleep cycle. Adequate sleep is important — not only for feeling rested but also for things like concentration, proper judgment and memory.

When your body produces enough melatonin, you're more likely to sleep deeply through the night. A good night's sleep allows your brain to process the things you learned and did that day, consolidating memories and allowing you to retain new information.

TAKE A FOREST BATH

Don't worry — you don't need a swimsuit or towel for this adventure. Forest bathing, also known as shinrin-yoku, is a Japanese healing method that refers to the act of simply spending time in the forest. It's not hiking or adventuring with any real destination in mind. You aren't trying to get somewhere. You're there to absorb the experience of being in nature.

The concept of shinrin-yoku is an important part of preventive healthcare in Japan and South Korea today and is supported by extensive research.

Known benefits include:

- better mood
- better sleep
- higher energy levels
- improved healing after surgery or illness
- lower blood pressure
- lower stress levels

Whether forest therapy is offered near you or not, you can practice shinrin-yoku on your own. Find a park or hiking trail nearby, ideally where you can be covered by a tree canopy, and set aside some time to meander and be present in the greenery that surrounds you.

..... Reasons to Keep Rolling

Sure, regular exercise is good for your heart, but that's just one of its whole-body benefits.

Here's a beyond-the-heart look at organs, structures and systems that benefit from regular physical activity:

- **Bones** — Weight-bearing exercise strengthens bones by prompting them to produce new tissue, which is especially important as loss of bone mass accelerates with age and the risk of fractures increases.
- **Brain** — Staying active helps stave off depression and keeps your problem-solving skills sharp.
- **Colon** — You can reduce your risk of colon cancer by exercising regularly. The same is true for breast cancer.
- **Joints** — Exercise strengthens the soft tissues that surround and bolster the joints. It also prevents joint stiffness and reduces arthritis pain.
- **Muscles** — Regular exercise stresses muscles, forcing them to get stronger. Flexibility exercises keep muscles loose, which, in turn, allows for more range of motion, mobility and independence.

CIRCLE OF ACTIVITY

By age 75, one-third of men and half of women don't exercise at all, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our Healthy Circle helps members stay active with fitness programs and special events. Lunch-and-learn presentations from medical professionals educate members about wellness topics, including exercise, that are important to them. The new friendships members form can blossom into walking or hiking clubs. We hope you'll let Our Healthy Circle encourage you stay on the move.



Join Big Bend Regional Medical Center's Our Healthy Circle by calling Ruth Huckle at (432) 847-2641 today. Let's keep moving!

STRETCHING for Its Own Sake

More than a means to an end, stretching is a valuable activity in its own right.

Whether you want to improve your ability to take dishes out of the top cabinet or pick up your grandchildren, stretching can help. It improves flexibility and range of motion, strengthens muscles and joints, boosts circulation, and helps maintain balance and functional ability. The American Academy of Family Physicians supports stretching for 15 to 20 minutes five days a week.

Talk with your physician before starting a stretching regimen. Once you have the OK, remember to go slowly and keep breathing.

These stretches from the National Institute on Aging can help you target two major muscle groups.

SHOULDERS

Stand with your back against a wall, feet apart and arms outstretched to the front at shoulder height. Bend your arms backward at the elbow until they touch the wall. Hold the position for 10–30 seconds. Rotate your arms forward until palms touch the wall and hold for the same amount of time. Repeat each motion at least three times.

LOWER BACK

While lying on your back on the floor, spread your arms out to your sides wide, bend your knees and keep your feet flat on the floor. With knees touching, slowly drop your legs to the right, hold for 10–30 seconds, return to center and lower to the other side. Repeat at least three times on each side.



Sneaky SODIUM

Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure and put your heart at risk. Learn how sodium finds its way into your food and how you can avoid it.

Ideal Intake



Adults should consume **fewer than 2,300mg** of sodium every day.



To **MAXIMIZE** **HEALTH BENEFITS**, adults should limit their daily sodium intake to **1,500mg a day or less**.



▶ People need fewer than **500mg of sodium** a day for their bodies to function properly.



Source: American Heart Association

So Much Sodium

▶ Average Americans consume **more than 3,400mg** of sodium daily.



>75%

MORE THAN 75 PERCENT of consumed sodium comes from prepackaged, processed and restaurant food — not table salt.



Many products — like chain pizza — contain **more sodium in the U.S.** than in other countries.



Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

See Ya, Sodium

Prepare fresh meals and **avoid prepackaged, processed and restaurant foods** to cut most sodium out of your diet.



Check the **NUTRITION FACTS LABEL** for foods with 5 percent Daily Value of sodium or less and products marked “low sodium.”

Gradually **reduce your sodium intake** and **use spices** to help your taste buds adjust.



Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



Visit BigBendAnytime.com and make an appointment with one of our caring providers or call (432) 214-8282. Big Bend Regional Health Center — here for you on your road to healthy.

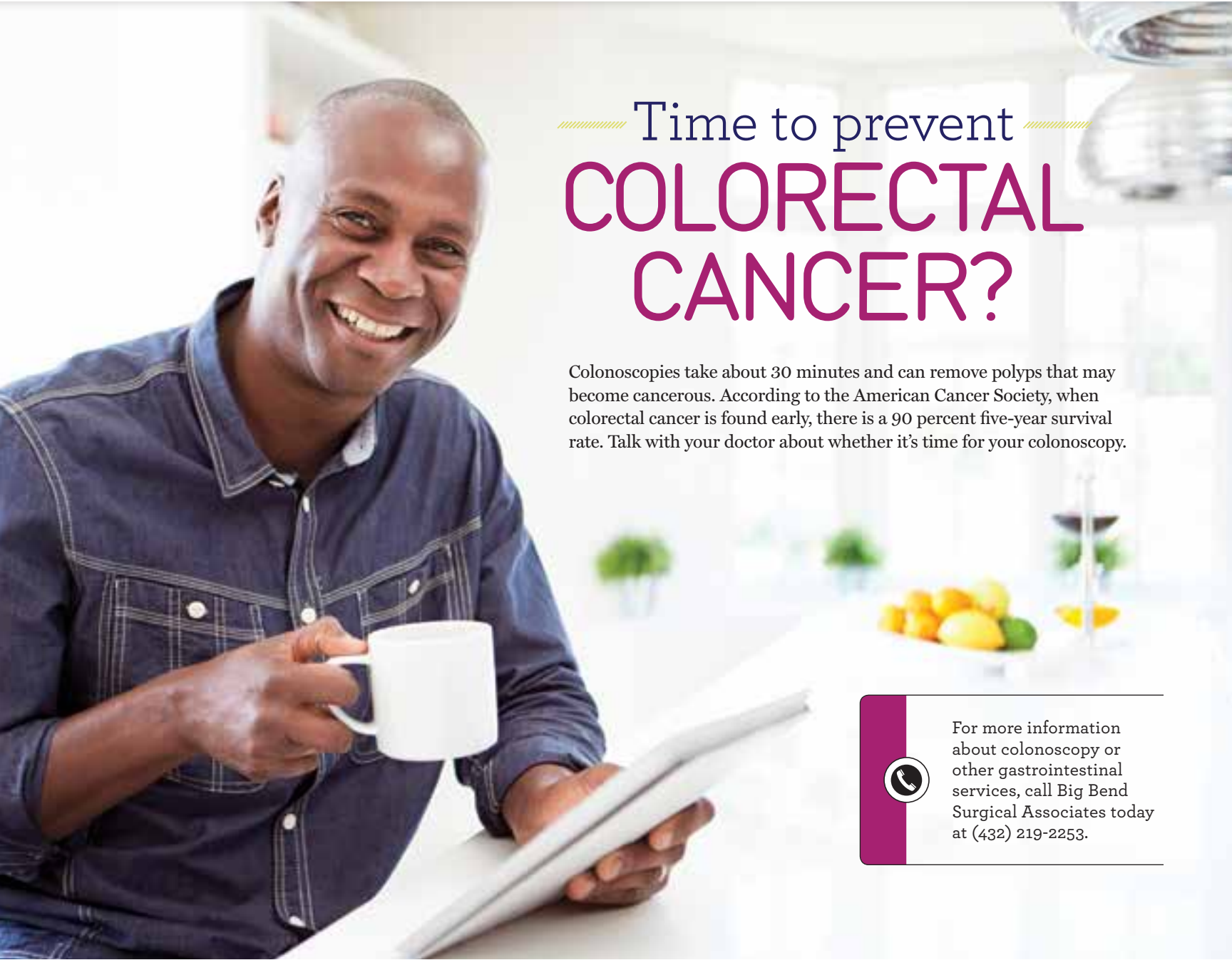
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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al (432) 837-3447 (TTY: (800) 735-2989).

CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số (432) 837-3447 (TTY: (800) 735-2989).

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This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your doctor before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.



Time to prevent COLORECTAL CANCER?

Colonoscopies take about 30 minutes and can remove polyps that may become cancerous. According to the American Cancer Society, when colorectal cancer is found early, there is a 90 percent five-year survival rate. Talk with your doctor about whether it's time for your colonoscopy.



For more information about colonoscopy or other gastrointestinal services, call Big Bend Surgical Associates today at (432) 219-2253.