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STRONG UNION

Actor Gabrielle Union
urges women not to put off
breast-cancer screenings

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You've Got a Friend

Gabrielle Union knows all too well the pain of breast cancer. She lost one of her closest friends to the disease in 2010. Today she's dedicated to spreading the word about the importance of breast cancer screening.

The Canine Connection

Promising new research looks at how treatments used to help dogs with cancer could one day help humans with the disease.

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Cover Photograph by
Alexei Hay/Trunk Archive



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“

**I HAVE TO
MAKE SURE
MY HEALTH
IS GREAT—SO
I'M AROUND
TO HELP MY
FAMILY.**

”

IN EVERY ISSUE

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EDITOR'S NOTE

TAKE 10

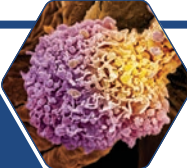
Sonequa Martin-Green of *The Walking Dead* shares how a family history of cancer spurred her to become a health activist. Plus, she reveals her favorite health advice and her ultimate “cheat food.”

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October marks the start of Breast Cancer Awareness month, an annual campaign to raise awareness about the disease. For actor **Gabrielle Union**, like it is for so many of us, this effort is deeply personal. She opens up to us in this month's cover story starting on page 28 about her close friend's diagnosis at age 31, and how she uses her star power to encourage women to get regular screenings. Unfortunately, when to start screenings is a matter of debate in the medical community. We speak with experts to better understand what's behind the conflicting guidelines.

Also in this issue, we look at some recent cancer research, a topic we'll explore further in our upcoming WebMD digital series with *Good Morning America*'s co-host **Robin Roberts**, *The Cutting Edge of Cancer*. And be sure to check out our back page as well to learn why actor **Sonequa Martin-Green** from *The Walking Dead* became an ambassador for Stand Up To Cancer. Like Union, a personal connection inspired her.

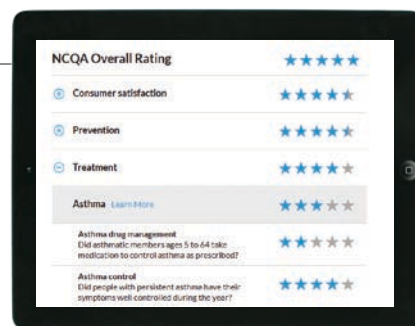
Take a look at these stories and more to help you and your loved ones make smarter prevention, diagnosis, and treatment decisions.

Kristy

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NEW TOOL YOU CAN USE



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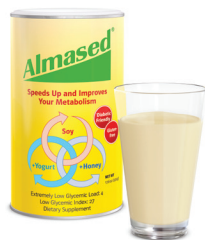
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HOT TOPICS!

CURRENT CANCER FACTS AND FIGURES

HEALTHY
START



More than **100**

Types of cancer researchers
have identified

Source: American Cancer Society

23%

Drop in cancer
death rate since its
peak in 1991

Source: American Cancer Society



66 years

Average age at which cancer
is diagnosed

Source: American Cancer Society

Most common
cancers in
women: breast,
lung, and
colorectal

Source: CDC



Most
common
cancers in
men: prostate,
lung, and
colorectal

Source: CDC



15.5 million

People who've **survived**
a cancer diagnosis

Source: American Cancer Society

EACH YEAR, more than
12 MILLION

dogs and cats are
diagnosed with cancer

Source: Fetch a Cure





NEW CANCER RISK

Recent research shows that gum disease may be linked to pancreatic cancer. People whose mouths harbored two bacteria related to periodontal disease were more likely to develop pancreatic cancer later on, according to a study of more than 700 people. The researchers can't say for sure that the bacteria cause cancer, but they could be a risk factor for the disease.

Source: American Association for Cancer Research

4.5%

Percentage of U.S. adults who eat meals considered "poor" quality—down from 56% in the last 15 years

Source: JAMA



BACK TO NATURE

A good reason to head for the great outdoors: In a study of more than 1,500 urban dwellers, those who spent at least 30 minutes a week in green spaces were less likely than their peers to have depression or high blood pressure.

Source: *Nature Scientific Reports*



Whole Health

Whole wheat or white? It makes a difference. An analysis of several studies including more than 78,000 adults found that people who ate more whole grains were less likely to die prematurely during the study period. Each daily serving slashed the risk of death from cancer by 5%, death from heart disease by 9%, and death from any cause by 7%. Greatest benefits come from three servings of whole grains per day, the researchers say.

Source: *Circulation*

JUMP START



For millennia, dogs have truly been man's (and woman's) best friend, providing protection, companionship, untold moments of pleasure, even unconditional love. Their contribution to humans' health and happiness has been researched and measured. But perhaps less well-known is dogs' role in human medicine, including cancer research, as we report in our story, "The Canine Connection."

Dogs and humans share about 85% of the same DNA, and dogs develop cancer much like we do. So researchers at 22 U.S. universities, part of the Comparative Oncology Trials Consortium, now study dogs with cancer in clinical trials to determine better tumor-fighting treatments for the dogs themselves—with potential implications for understanding and treating cancer in people.

The results so far are pretty exciting. "A handful of products have been added to the market that were initially tested in pet dogs with cancer," says one of our experts. Even better, some dogs survived longer and had a better quality of life thanks to the trials. For more, turn to page 34.

Colleen

Colleen Paretty
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LATE ARRIVAL

Being late is usually not a good thing. But for babies, showing up a week or two after they're expected could bring benefits later on. A study of 1.5 million kids in Florida public schools found that those who were born at 41 weeks had higher test scores in elementary and middle school than those born at 39 or 40 weeks. They were also more likely to be classified as "gifted."

Source: *JAMA Pediatrics*

8%

Percentage of U.S. adults older than 40 who have coronary heart disease, a leading cause of death in the nation. That's down from 10% in 2001.

Source: *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*



Hot Hits

What's trending
on WebMD.com right now*

Vitamins and
minerals

Foods for sleep

Hand-foot-and-
mouth disease

Thyroid symptoms

Estrogen

*as of August 1, 2016

EXERCISE YOUR MEMORY

Cramming for a test? Try scheduling study and exercise about four hours apart. In an experiment, 72 young adults studied a series of images. Twenty-four of them did a cardio workout immediately after. Another 24 waited four hours to exercise. The rest skipped the workout. Two days later, everyone took a memory recall test on the images. Those who exercised four hours after studying performed far better than the rest. Researchers found no difference in those who exercised immediately and those who didn't exercise at all.

Source: *Current Biology*



Take Note

Want a foolproof trick for remembering what someone tells you? Simply grab a pen and notepad. Sound oh-so nondigital? That may be, but a recent study suggests that taking notes prevents details from slipping your mind. Another study suggests handwriting trumps typing. To secure more details in your mental vault, try these tips:

Use your own words.

Instead of copying someone's speech verbatim, jot down the main points.

Review what you've written.

Reread your notes later to keep them fresh in your mind.

Speak up.

Borrow a strategy that Dartmouth College teaches its Ivy League students: Recite and repeat key concepts aloud.

Be brief.

Use short sentences, phrases, and abbreviations. Keep it simple with bullets and lists.

Be ready for anything: a doctor's visit, teacher's conference, or important telephone call. Simply stash a pad and pen in your car, in your bag, and next to the phone. Yes, even your smartphone.

—Kara Mayer Robinson



WORKPLACE HEALTH

Working Through Cancer

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU CAN AND WANT TO DO YOUR JOB DURING TREATMENT

By Sonya Collins



● For the time being, cancer treatment is going to be a part of your life. Maybe you're wondering how you'll have time for work with cancer or maybe you're wondering how you'll have time for *cancer* with work. Whether you can or should work during your treatment depends on the type of cancer, the treatment, and the work you do. But if you can work and want to, no hard and fast rule says you shouldn't.

"If you're capable of doing it, I encourage you to work. Psychologically it's a big plus," says Jim Hankins, MSW, LCSW, director of patient support and social services at Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University in Atlanta. "If you're not working, what are you going to think about? Cancer."

So how do you tell your boss? You're not required to tell your employer anything.

But if you expect to lose your hair or take time off for treatment, you might decide it's best to explain why. If so, it's probably a good idea to wait until you know your treatment plan. That way, you can tell your employer exactly what you need—whether it's time off, flexible hours, or the option to work from home.

The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures that you won't get fired for hav-

ing cancer, going through chemotherapy, or requesting reasonable work accommodations. If the side effects from your treatment mean extra trips to the bathroom or that you need to make changes to your workstation, this law can help you with that, too. As long as you are still able to do your job, the ADA prevents discrimination based on your condition.

Maybe your diagnosis came right after you'd used up all your sick days and vacation time. The Family and Medical Leave Act says that companies of 50 employees or more must allow up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to recover from a serious health condition.

Even though you have the right to work with cancer, that doesn't mean you won't need to slow down. A high-stress workplace and round-the-clock demands might not be best for someone trying to get better.

"You have to create some kind of work/life balance. Eat right, get some exercise, and sleep," Hankins says. "This is a time that you're going through treatment. Your body's going to need to heal. You need all the strength you can get."

HOW TO DECIDE

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT HOW YOU'LL BALANCE WORK AND CANCER TREATMENT? ASK YOUR DOCTOR THESE QUESTIONS:

How can I expect to feel during my treatment?

How do other people like me feel during the same treatment?

How much fatigue will I have?

How long will any side effects last?

Can a social worker help me balance work and treatment?

Reviewed by
Brunilda Nazario, MD
WebMD Lead Medical Editor



WORK IT OUT

Post-Workout Moves

WHAT YOU DO *AFTER* YOU EXERCISE CAN REALLY HELP YOU GET FIT

By Kara Mayer Robinson

● Your fitness routine doesn't end when you hit the showers. The downtime after your workouts is when the good stuff happens: Your muscles repair and rebuild themselves, and your fitness level surges.

Want to optimize your recovery and propel your future workouts to the next level? Make these post-workout practices a regular part of your regimen.

1. Refuel

Dip into a stash of carbohydrate- and protein-rich foods after you work out. A healthy snack at the right time tops off your energy supply and helps repair and rebuild your muscles.

About 20 to 60 minutes after your workout, have a snack that's two-thirds carbs and one-third protein, like a turkey sandwich on whole grain bread.

2. Rehydrate

"Replenishing your water is critical to optimize your recovery," says Eric Oliver, PT, owner of Beyond Exercise, an athletic development and physical therapy facility in Cincinnati. Sipping H₂O post-workout restores cell function, boosts circulation, and brings your body temperature back to normal.

Drink 8 ounces before your workout, 7 to 10 ounces every 20 minutes during exercise, and another 8 ounces after. For a flavor boost, add a splash of 100% fruit juice or a slice of lime.

3. Massage

Kick muscle tightness, aches, and limitations to the curb with a soft-tissue massage. "If you can't get a massage, using products like foam rollers or massage balls is a decent substitute," Oliver says. Roll them slowly over your muscles, and when you find a sore spot, hold it there for 30 to 60 seconds.

4. Compress

Many athletes and fitness buffs rock compression socks, tights, and sleeves while they work out. But keeping them on longer may be beneficial. Recent research suggests that donning compression wear after exercise—even while you sleep—may aid muscle recovery.

5. Ice

Ice packs and ice baths are a tried-and-true recovery tool. The frigid temp constricts your blood vessels, which sends extra oxygen to your muscles when they warm up again.

Some pros suggest flipping between an ice bath and

a hot shower. Soak in frigid water for 45 seconds, then let a hot shower cascade over you for three to four minutes. Repeat several times, always starting and ending with cold.

6. Go light

Intense exercise has major benefits, but gentle workouts deserve credit, too. They boost blood circulation, promote the flow of nutrients to your muscles, and prevent scarring of muscle and connective tissue, Oliver says. Try low-intensity activities like yoga or walking a few times a week.

7. Take off

"Recovery days are critical in developing more strength, power, or speed from your exercise efforts," Oliver says.

If you work out hard, alternate muscle groups on different days. Every week, pencil in one full day off plus one day of active recovery, like stretching, easy cardio, or core work.

If you're a low-key exerciser, you don't need a day off. But, says Oliver, "it doesn't hurt to have that time off to let your body and mind relax and recover for the next week of exercise."



Reviewed by
Michael W. Smith, MD, CPT
WebMD Chief Medical Editor



MEN'S HEALTH

5 Cancer Clues

EARLY DETECTION IS KEY, SO PAY ATTENTION TO THESE SIGNS

By Matt McMillen

● Behind on screenings? Avoiding the doctor? When it comes to cancer, think about changing your game plan. You might be able to beat the disease if your doctor catches it early on.

“With many cancers, the earlier we find it, the more effectively we can treat it,” says Durado Brooks, MD, MPH, a specialist in prevention and early detection at the American Cancer Society. “If left alone, many cancers will grow and spread.” That’s why Brooks says men shouldn’t ignore these five symptoms.

1. Lumps and bumps. If you notice a new growth anywhere on your body, get it checked out if it does not go away or gets larger. An enlarged lymph node in your neck, for example, may indicate an infection—but it could also be a sign of cancers like leukemia or lymphoma. And don’t ignore a lump on your testicles. “If it lasts two to three weeks or grows, see your doctor,” Brooks says. Testicular cancer can be treated very effectively in its early stages.

2. Blood in your urine or stool. “This should always be taken very seriously,” Brooks says. “In most cases, it’s not cancer, but if it is cancer, you want to know about it and address it early on.” Bloody urine could signal bladder or prostate cancer, while bloody stools point to colorectal cancer. Caught early, both bladder and colon cancer have high survival rates.



3. Changes in bathroom habits. If your daily bowel movements dwindle to once or twice per week, that should sound an alarm, especially if you also have persistent stomach pain—both may signal colon cancer. See a doctor if these symptoms last more than a few days. The same goes if you find yourself getting up several times in the night to pee or if you have trouble starting or stopping your urine stream. In most cases, such changes are due to benign enlargement of the prostate, but they can be a symptom of prostate cancer, Brooks says.

4. Unexplained weight loss.

If you drop 10 to 15 pounds in a few months without changes to your diet or exercise habits, get evaluated. This type of weight loss may signal cancer of the pancreas, stomach, esophagus, or lung, or some other serious health problem. “Don’t assume it’s cancer, but assume something is going on,” Brooks says.

5. Skin changes. Sores that don’t heal, raised growths or lumps, moles that change, and other odd skin appearances could be a sign of skin cancer, which is easily treatable when caught early. If you see something, see your doctor, Brooks says. “Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., but most are not fatal or disfiguring.”



ASK YOUR DOCTOR

1. Does anything in my family history indicate I have a higher risk of cancer?
2. What lifestyle changes can I make to reduce my risk of cancer?
3. How can I best take responsibility for my overall health?

Reviewed by **Michael W. Smith, MD**
WebMD Chief Medical Editor

Get Even

A splattering of freckles across the nose is cute in your teens and 20s, but later on brown spots from the sun or hormone-induced melasma patches can add years to your complexion. Dermatologist Kally Papantoniou, MD, clinical instructor at Mount Sinai Health Center in New York City, suggests a simple dark-spot-diminishing plan.

Get skin under control.

If you still get acne lesions, new scars and dark spots will continue to develop. Use a broad spectrum SPF 30 (or higher) sunscreen to prevent current spots from darkening due to sun exposure.

Stock up on retinoic acid.

Retinoic acid (prescription) or retinol (over the counter) creams can help stimulate new collagen production and skin cell turnover.

Try a dermaroller.

This product, a roller with numerous fine needles, rolls over scars to create small perforations. New collagen forms to heal them. Use it once or twice weekly; spots and blotchiness should fade in a few months.

Be patient.

It can take three to six months to see the full effect of a treatment. We're talking about a tissue-remodeling process, with new collagen and elastin production, which takes time. —*Ayren Jackson-Cannady*

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BEAUTY SMARTS

The Peels Deal

HOW CHEMICAL TREATMENTS CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR SKIN

By Liesa Goins

HOW TO PREP
AND RECOVER
WELL

YOUR SKIN CARE BEFORE AND AFTER A PEEL MAKES A BIG IMPACT ON YOUR RESULTS AND RECOVERY TIME. HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD DO.

Moisturize.

Keeping your skin hydrated helps prevent irritation and speed the healing process, dermatologist Dendy Engelman, MD, explains. Add heavier moisturizers to your routine, and make sure you're applying liberally at bedtime.

Stop using retinoids.

Since retinoids speed up cell turnover and have potential for irritation, stop using them a week before a peel, Katherine Holcomb, MD, says. The doctor will advise that you stop using hydroquinone and other exfoliants.

Go gentle.

Holcomb tells her patients to follow a gentle skin care routine of fragrance-free and moisturizing products and to limit the use of acne and anti-aging products until skin has completely healed.

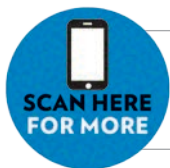
Wear sun protection.

Perhaps the most important directive is to wear sun protection every second you're outside, Engelman says. The surface of the skin is new and especially vulnerable to injury. Plus, you've just erased sun damage, so you don't want to start the cycle all over again.

As the seasons change, so should your skin care. Aside from swapping in heavier-duty moisturizers, scheduling a peel now can help your skin recover from summer's excesses. "Peels are often performed to correct the damage during extended sun exposure," says Dendy Engelman, MD, a dermatologist in New York City and director of dermatologic surgery at New York Medical College. "When a peel is done during colder

months, you're not going to suffer recurring damage from the sun." Your resurfaced skin has time to heal before you're spending a lot of time outside, which increases the benefits of a peel.

Timing is important because of the way peels work. In a professional peel, a doctor applies a combination of acids that penetrate the skin to stimulate cell turnover and remove the surface layer of dull skin cells. "Generally, a peel causes the bonds



Check out **No-Knife Cosmetic Fixes**, a slideshow at WebMD.com.

[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)

between cells to break, making it easier to remove them from the surface,” Engelman says. The acids also help treat sun damage by removing pigment from the skin’s surface, and they inhibit the production of more pigmentation.

Their strength varies, from a mild “lunchtime” peel to a deep peel that requires anesthesia and a couple weeks of recovery. “The lunchtime-type peels have no downtime, but require multiple treatments to see major results,” says Katherine Holcomb, MD, a clinical assistant professor of dermatology at Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans. “I do many more big-impact peels that have some downtime but yield quicker results.”

Chemical peels treat a range of skin complaints including acne, uneven pigmentation, fine lines, dullness, and rough texture. “When you come in for a peel, you should have an idea of what your primary concern is,” Holcomb says. “Certain peels are better for each complaint, and we can tailor the peel to each patient’s primary concern.”

Doctors often combine acids to maximize the results. For example, salicylic acid and lactic acid are frequently combined because together they help remove surface cells. The addition of phenylethyl resorcinol offers the benefit of inhibiting pigment production.

“Peels are the most effective way of exfoliating the skin,” Engelman says. “Chemical



The Scoop

Can probiotics really improve my skin?

You’re likely already hip to the health benefits of probiotics (aka the good-for-you bacteria found in foods like yogurt and kimchi), including supporting your immune system, easing depression, and preventing obesity. Now a recent study suggests that topical products that contain probiotics may also offer some skin benefits, perhaps acting like an anti-inflammatory while boosting antimicrobial properties. The result could mean fewer outbreaks of acne and eczema.

In the study, researchers found that probiotics applied topically improve the skin’s barrier function and decrease acne flares.

Understand that you are not applying bacteria or anything fermented to your skin. Rather, scientists have created a shelf-stable synthetic probiotic for skin care.

To see if your serum or face cream includes probiotics, look on the ingredients list for *Lactobacillus ferment*, a lactic acid bacteria that stabilizes active ingredients, improves cell renewal, and encourages skin healing.

Two products I like are Tula Hydrating Day & Night Cream, infused with probiotic technology to hydrate skin and reduce the appearance of wrinkles, and LJH Probiotics Sleeping Cream, a blemish-fighting night product.

—**Debra Jaliman, MD**, assistant professor of dermatology, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, New York City, and author of *Skin Rules: Trade Secrets From a Top New York Dermatologist*

AISLE DO

“I love this volumizing spray; it doesn’t weigh down my hair or leave a residue. My hair is fine and needs all of the volume it can get. A French hairstylist introduced me to the spray, and I immediately liked that it has a light and clean scent—I’m very sensitive to fragrance, and this doesn’t make me sneeze. I spray it from roots to ends on wet hair, brush it through, and blow-dry. The wheat proteins and amino acids in the formula create thickness, but don’t feel sticky the way hairspray can. Since it’s non-sticky, I can restyle my hair the next day without having to shampoo again.”



PRODUCT PICK
Phyto Phytovolume Actif (\$15)

EXPERT
Amy Wechsler, MD
dermatologist, New York City,
and assistant clinical professor of dermatology,
SUNY Downstate Medical Center

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Dirty Secret

TIME TO TOSS IT?

***“I don’t pay attention to makeup expiration dates.
How bad is that?”***

Expiration dates are important because as ingredients degrade over time, products can become contaminated with bacteria and cause skin reactions or infections.

With makeup, you need to be especially cautious with anything you apply to your eyes or lips. It’s easy to leave an eyeliner or lip gloss in a drawer for months, but that doesn’t mean it’s still good. I see patients with pinkeye (conjunctivitis) and cold sores from using contaminated makeup. You’ll know a product is expired if it smells bad, if the color or consistency has changed, or if it applies differently.

To keep track of expiration dates, keep a marker handy to write the date you open any makeup. When in doubt, toss old products. It’s better to buy new makeup than to treat infections or breakouts.

—**Papri Sarkar, MD**, dermatologist,
Brookline, Massachusetts

exfoliants work more evenly than mechanical scrubs, which can vary depending on degree of pressure and time spent on certain areas.”

Whether you’re considering a drugstore product or a professional peel, it’s wise to seek a doctor’s opinion. When in doubt, opt for the lowest concentration and strictly follow instructions. Professional peels will offer the most dramatic results, but incorporating salicylic or glycolic acid into your daily routine will also provide some benefits, Engelman says.

And don’t let the term “peel” scare you: Dermatologists have many options for mild peels whose only side effects are flaking and redness. Bottom line, according to Holcomb: “There are so many peel options and the chemical technology is so predictable that there really is a peel for everyone.”

Reviewed by **Mohiba Tareen, MD**
WebMD Medical Reviewer

Dermatologists have many options for mild peels with only minor side effects.



Check out **The Beauty Benefits of Natural Oils**, a slideshow at WebMD.com.

[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)

EXPERT PICKS

Get Up and Glow

REJUVENATE YOUR SKIN WITH THESE SIX OILS

By Ayren Jackson-Cannady

1 **Currant Affairs** Cecilia Wong Reviving Black Currant Serum, \$72

"Perfect for skin in need of some TLC, this helps hydrate a worn out complexion from too much time in the sun. Bonus: This oil is rich in fatty acids and anti-inflammatories, which may improve skin texture and softness."

2 **Brighten Up** The Organic Pharmacy Virgin Cold Pressed Rose Hip Oil, \$60

"This is a dry oil that penetrates deep into skin layers to regenerate skin cells and increase collagen production. This oil contains retinoic acid, which helps to brighten the skin and reduce the appearance of wrinkles."

3 **Hemp Hydrator** Nutiva Organic Hemp Oil, \$18

"This is my all-time favorite because it does not clog pores. Also, studies show that the linoleic acid in hemp oil can boost hydration to prevent age-related drying and flaking."

4 **Grape Escape** The Vitamin Shoppe Grape Seed Oil, \$8

"Best used to combat greasy skin, a few drops of this oil, with its natural antioxidants, has a mild astringent effect. Note that some people with acne-prone skin can tolerate this oil, but not all."

5 **Double Duty** Acure Organics Argan Facial Oil, \$12.99

"This oil, which is light enough to use every day, pulls double duty since it can be used on your hair and on your face. It contains antioxidants, essential fatty acids, and vitamin E, which together serve as a superfood for your skin."

6 **Give Me a 'Tea'** The Body Shop Tea Tree Oil, \$10

"Try this natural acne-fighting alternative made with a generous 5% tea tree oil; it works to help treat those unwanted blemishes that pop up."



Seth Forman, MD
clinical dermatologist,
Tampa, Florida

Reviewed by
Karyn Grossman, MD
WebMD Medical Reviewer

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Learning to Share

Despite parents' best wishes, taking turns may be too sophisticated for kids younger than 5, according to new research in the journal *Psychological Science*.

Researchers designed a machine that delivers a prize out of one side or the other. Two children facing each other on opposite sides of the machine must each pull their lever in the same direction to release a prize on one side, while the prize on the other side disappears. After a prize is released, the machine resets. Then the children can agree to pull the levers the other way, so the other child gets the reward.

Twenty-four pairs of 5-year-olds worked it out and managed to release a prize more than 99% of the time. But their 3½-year-old counterparts got a prize from the machine only 62% of the time. The other times, they couldn't let go of their own self-interest and agree which way to pull the lever.

"Encouragement and modeling turn-taking could help at younger ages, making children aware they both get what they want and both are happy afterward," says Alicia Melis, PhD, assistant professor of behavioral science at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, and author of the study. —*Sonya Collins*



PARENTING

The Write Stuff

PENCILS, PAPER, AND PENMANSHIP MAY BE GOOD FOR GROWING KIDS' BRAINS

By Lisa Marshall



● Today's schoolchildren get about one-fourth the handwriting instruction their parents got, and many never learn cursive at all, thanks to the rise of computers and new education guidelines that de-emphasize penmanship. That concerns some educators and brain researchers, who say putting pencil to paper stimulates brain circuits involved with memory, attention, motor skills, and language in a way punching a keyboard doesn't.

"There is this assumption that we live in the computer age, and we don't need handwriting anymore. That's wrong," says Virginia Berninger, PhD, a professor of educational psychology at University of Washington.

Priming the Preschool Brain

Indiana University psychologist Karin James, PhD, recently published a study looking at brain scans of preschoolers before and after they learned to produce letters, either by printing or typing.

WRITING STEP BY STEP

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST VIRGINIA BERNINGER, PhD, OFFERS THESE GUIDELINES FOR INTRODUCING VARIOUS WRITING TOOLS:

Preschool

Strengthen motor skills by playing with clay, stringing beads, working through mazes, and connecting dots with arrows to form letters.

Kindergarten to second grade
Master block letters.

Third to fourth grade
Learn cursive.

Fifth grade
Continue to write by hand while introducing typing by touch (not just hunt and peck).

Onward
Many tablets allow writing directly on screen with a pen or stylus. Writing by hand doesn't mean not using technology.

Before the lesson, the children couldn't decipher between a random shape and a letter, and their brains responded similarly to each. After they learned to hand-draw a letter, brain regions instrumental for reading lit up at the sight of the letter like they do in a literate adult. Learning to type a letter yielded no such change.

James suspects that practicing a sloppy letter over and over—rather than just pecking a perfect one on a keyboard—helps a child recognize it better later. In fact, numerous studies have shown that preschoolers who practice handwriting read better in elementary school. But the benefits don't end there.

Handwriting also requires concentration and teaches brain circuits responsible for motor coordination, vision, and memory to work together. "If in the future we were to take away teaching handwriting altogether, I worry there could be real negative impacts on children's development," James says.

The Value of Longhand

Timed right, cursive also comes with some unique advantages. Berninger's research suggests kids who link their letters via cursive get a better handle on what those words look like and end up being better spellers, she says. Cursive also allows them to compose their thoughts faster than in block handwriting or via typing (at least until about seventh grade, when their brains become mature enough to manage two-handed typing quickly).

"I always encourage my own students to take handwritten notes," James says.

Reviewed by Roy Benaroch, MD
WebMD Medical Reviewer



Get the **WebMD Pregnancy App** to keep track every day, until your baby's birthday.

[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)

PREGNANCY

Dads Matter

NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT A MAN'S AGE AND LIFESTYLE MAY INFLUENCE HIS CHILDREN'S HEALTH

By Matt McMillen

It's not just about Mom. New research shows that a man's age and lifestyle may have a significant effect on his children's health—well before they are born.

Joanna Kitlinska, PhD, an assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular and cellular biology at Georgetown University, looked at dozens of studies on dads' and children's health. The research she reviewed suggests "that paternal age, lifestyle, and certain exposures can have an impact on children," she says.

Here's how: Age and unhealthy habits cause changes to a man's genes. Although scientists don't yet fully understand how it happens, these changes are then passed on to his kids—perhaps even to his grandchildren. For example, a man's obesity may affect his genes in a way that makes his children more likely to be obese. Or tobacco smoke may damage a man's sperm, allowing it to pass on potentially harmful genes to his children.

Most of the studies were able to show only a link between the two and didn't prove one causes the other. The field requires much more research. Absolute risks of birth defects and other issues remain low for any one child, and researchers still believe the mother's health and habits while pregnant have a much stronger impact on a child's health. Here's a breakdown of what Kitlinska and her colleagues found.

Age

Studies that Kitlinska's team reviewed showed that children whose fathers were older than 40 had a much higher risk of autism than those with fathers younger than 30. Older fathers also tend to have children at greater risk of schizophrenia. No one knows why.

Another study links fathers older than 35 to higher chances for heart problems in their kids as well as birth defects such as Down syndrome.

Diet

Obese men appear to father children who face a higher risk for obesity, diabetes, abnormal metabolism,

and certain cancers, perhaps because the father's obesity and poor nutrition cause changes in certain genes directly linked to these conditions.

Alcohol

As many as 3 out of 4 children diagnosed with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders have alcoholic fathers. Children with these disorders may have low birth weight, impaired brain development, and learning disabilities.

"With alcohol and many other exposures, it's been believed that it's mainly mothers who influence the children directly," says Kitlinska, whose review challenges that notion.

Practice Healthy Habits

Kitlinska says more research needs to be done before any conclusions can be drawn from this "relatively new field of study." But her work suggests that fathers-to-be should take good care of themselves. That means a healthy diet, regular exercise, limited alcohol, and no smoking.

"It's common sense to have a healthy lifestyle if you are planning to have children," she says.

Reviewed by
Hansa Bhargava, MD
WebMD Medical Editor

GALLERY STOCK





Get the **WebMD Baby App** to track growth and capture your baby's special moments.

[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)

BABY TALK

Tot Shots

MAKE VACCINES LESS PAINFUL FOR YOUR BABY—AND LESS STRESSFUL FOR YOU

By Stephanie Watson



By the time your baby is a year old, she'll need at least 16 vaccinations. The pain of each needle stick is fleeting for her, but the stress of seeing your baby cry can stick with you.

Fear of painful shots shouldn't steer you away from the recommended vaccination schedule. Vaccines are all that stand between your baby and dangerous childhood diseases like polio, diphtheria, measles, and rubella. "With each shot you get an increase in immunity," says John W. Harrington, MD, professor of pediatrics at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

And vaccines don't have to hurt. "You can do a lot of different things to address the baby's pain," Harrington says.

The Five S's

The side/stomach position, shushing, swinging, swaddling, and sucking soothe fussy babies, and are also a good distraction technique during vaccines. Here's how it works: You hold baby on his stomach or side. After the doctor or nurse gives the shot, you quickly swaddle baby in a blanket. Then you swing him, make a shushing sound in one ear, and place a pacifier in his mouth. When Harrington and his team

tested the five S's on a group of infants, the method decreased pain scores and crying time. You don't need to use all five S's, he says. Pick those that work best for your baby.

Numbing Medicine

For a child older than 3, a spritz of a cooling spray or smear of anesthetic cream before the vaccination will numb her arm or leg. Then when the needle goes in, she'll feel less pain.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding soothes the fussiest of babies, and it may relieve vaccine pain even better than cooling spray. Try nursing your baby before the shots, as part of the five S's, or right afterward.

Tandem Shots

At 2 months, 4 months, and 6 months, many babies will need three or more shots in the same visit. It might seem like giving two shots simultaneously (one in each leg or arm) would accentuate pain, but the opposite is true. "When you tandem shoot like that, the brain gets confused," Harrington says.

One thing you may not want to do is give your baby Tylenol before vaccinations. A 2009 study found the pain reliever reduces the body's immune response, which could make vaccines less effective. But ask your pediatrician; if your baby is in pain afterward, a little Tylenol might be OK.

Finally, try to calm your own nerves so they don't rub off on your baby. "You really want to have the parent on board," Harrington says. "If they're skittish about the vaccines, their emotions can increase the child's anxiety."



ASK YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

1. Which vaccinations will my baby need?
2. What's the schedule?
3. What are the possible risks and side effects?
4. What will you do to reduce my baby's pain during and after the shots?
5. What should I do if my baby has a reaction to a vaccine?

Reviewed by **Hansa Bhargava, MD**
WebMD Medical Editor



PET HEALTH

Spotting Cancer

MILLIONS OF DOGS AND CATS DEVELOP CANCER EVERY YEAR.
KNOW WHAT TO WATCH FOR

By Sonya Collins



You're vigilant about the signs of cancer your doctor tells you to watch out for—an irregular mole or a suspicious lump. But do you know the possible signs in your pets? Not just a two-legged problem, cancer is all too common in cats and dogs. Doctors find more than a million cases in their human patients every year. Veterinarians, on the other hand, diagnose about 6 million cancers a year in dogs and another 6 million in cats.

“Animals can't tell us what they're feeling. We have to be observant,” says Brian Collins, DVM, chief of community practice at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine in Ithaca, New York.

Lumps, Growths, Tumors

A lump isn't automatically cause for alarm. Middle-aged and older dogs often get benign fatty tumors. But a veterinarian should check any lump on your pet. If you've been watching one, and it changes, that warrants a vet visit, too. “It may start to grow more rapidly, become [an open sore], start bleeding, or seem painful because the animal is licking or chewing it,” Collins says.

A red, teary, or bulging eye might be harboring a tumor. Tumors can also cause symptoms of an ear infection. “The ear might be uncomfortable. The pet might be shaking its head or clawing at the ear. There might be discharge or an odor,” Collins says.

Growths on the lips, gums, or tongue can be a sign of oral cancer. These may come with bad breath, too.

A suddenly expanded belly without any other weight gain could point to an abdominal tumor. Unexplained weight loss could be a complication of cancer as well.

A veterinarian should check any lump on your pet. If you've been watching one, and it changes, that warrants a vet visit, too.



New Behaviors

Cancer can cause changes in your pet's behavior or habits, such as decreased appetite, chronic vomiting or diarrhea, coughing or labored breathing, increased thirst, and change in food preferences. Take notice if a once-active dog suddenly spends all his time lying around—or limping, a possible sign of bone cancer. Straining to urinate or other changes in pee patterns, such as increased volume or frequency, might be a red flag, too.

“Your pet's personality might seem to change. Maybe they become more withdrawn, act more irritable, or hide. They might develop new quirky behaviors. These could be potential signs of a brain tumor,” Collins says. Cancer-related personality changes could also include pacing, agitation, and wanting to go outside more.

False Alarms

Before you see your vet, don't panic or jump to conclusions. The tricky thing about symptoms of cancer is

that they can be signs of other problems, too. Straining to urinate, for example, could point to a urinary tract infection. Cough in a dog might mean heart disease; in a cat, asthma. Excessive thirst can stem from diabetes or kidney problems. Diarrhea and vomiting may suggest any one of a host of diseases.

“A lot of these symptoms overlap with other diseases as well, so I generally recommend if people see any of these signs to go to the vet,” Collins says. “We don't want people to always be on the edge of their seats about cancer, but we don't want to let something go unnoticed or progress too far before action is taken either.”

CANCER TREATMENT BASICS

DID YOU JUST LEARN YOUR PET HAS CANCER? ASK YOUR VETERINARIAN THESE QUESTIONS:

If my pet is older, how will treatment extend his overall survival?

How long will my pet have a good quality of life without and with treatment?

What will be the cost and time commitment of treatment?

Are most people glad they pursued treatment for this type of cancer?

Reviewed by **Will Draper, DVM**
WebMD Medical Reviewer



KIDS' HEALTH

Children at Risk

WE NEED TO SCREEN KIDS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISORDERS. OUR EXPERT EXPLAINS WHY

By *Stephanie Watson*



● About 1 in 5 kids in the United States has a mental health or learning disorder, according to the Child Mind Institute, a nonprofit that focuses on mental health care for children.

Children who aren't diagnosed and treated early on can face a lifetime of educational, legal, and emotional issues, according to the organization's *2016 Children's Mental Health Report*. Institute president Harold S. Koplewicz, MD, explains why schools can—and should—do more to identify and help these at-risk kids.

What happens to kids with mental health issues in schools?

The bad news is that schools overwhelmingly have adopted a zero-tolerance discipline policy. Kids are kicked out much faster than ever before. In 1974, school suspensions were 1.7 million. In 2001, we had 3.1 million suspensions.

The current antiquated way of focusing on bad behavior is throwing more kids out of school, but it's not effectively increasing high school graduation rates.

What are the best interventions for children with mental health issues?

I think the most effective

programs are positive behavioral interventions and supports, which focus on reinforcing kids' positive behaviors. It takes an effort, from the head of the school all the way to the lunch-room staff and the custodial staff, to focus on when kids are doing positive things. Schools that have adopted this cultural change of positive behavioral intervention and support have a 30% decrease in in-school suspension. We know that if you keep kids in school, they have a better chance of graduating high school. And when they graduate high school, they have a lower risk of going to jail.

How can schools identify which kids are in need of mental health services?

I would love to see national screening. Schools do hearing tests and vision tests. They should also do mental health screening. I think there should be a 10-question screener in seventh grade and again in ninth grade. The reason for doing it in those grades is to see results pre-puberty and post-puberty.

What can parents do if they know or suspect their child has a mental health issue?

I would imagine that the No. 1 problem parents have is that they're ashamed. [We need to] get parents to not feel defensive about it and instead say, It's not a matter of my child being defective—it's just that my child has symptoms that are making their functioning in school more challenging, and as a good parent I need to find out what those symptoms are, what those symptoms mean, and whether there is something I can do to make their life easier at school.

Reviewed by
Hansa Bhargava, MD
WebMD Medical Editor

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YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND

Inspired by the loss of a close pal, **Gabrielle Union** is on a mission to empower women to get cancer screenings

By Kara Mayer Robinson



Gabrielle Union with her friend
Kristen Martinez

WHEN LIFE DELIVERS A BLOW, actor Gabrielle Union doesn't sit around and stew. Instead she takes action. Case in point: In 2005, she discovered that her close friend Kristen Martinez, then 31, had stage 4 metastatic breast cancer. Without skipping a beat, Union rallied behind Martinez and her family to arrange treatment that could boost Martinez's chances of survival.

"We were all like, 'We're going to get her cured,'" says Union. "Let's go to Mexico or let's go to Europe—whoever was doing cutting-edge work. As long as we could find the funds, let's do it."

Because it was late-stage cancer, Martinez didn't have a minute to waste. She thought her odds would be best with progressive treatment and clinical trials. But because they were considered experimental, her insurance didn't cover them. So Union plunged into grassroots fundraising. She hosted casino nights and auctioned off high-ticket items to help her friend pay for the care she wanted.

Photography by Jeff Lipsky





OPPOSITE PAGE: JEFF LIPSKY/CPI SYNDICATION. THIS PAGE: COURTESY GABRIELLE UNION

“It looked like a miracle happened.
Her hair was growing back. She was gaining her weight back. She looked amazing. It was like she was cured.”

After Martinez completed a clinical trial, things began to look up, and then suddenly the cancer seemed to be gone. “It looked like a miracle happened. Her hair was growing back. She was gaining her weight back. She looked amazing. It was like she was cured,” Union says.

But instead, less than a year later, the cancer was anything but gone. In 2010, five years after her diagnosis, Kristen Martinez died.

“It had never occurred to me that she was not going to beat it,” says Union, 43, who stars in the BET television series *Being Mary Jane* and has appeared in movies like *Top Five* and *Bring It On*. “I guess nobody Googled what metastatic means. We didn’t realize that the prognosis is sort of built into the diagnosis.”

DO EARLIER DIAGNOSES MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Metastatic cancer is cancer that has spread to other parts of the body. While some treatments can help some women with metastatic breast cancer live longer, the disease is not curable, says Katherine Crew, MD, an oncologist at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia Medical Center. By the time Martinez received her diagnosis, cancer cells had traveled from her breast to her bones.

Would the outcome be different if Martinez had discovered her cancer sooner? Maybe. “The earlier breast cancer is detected, the greater the likelihood of cure,” says Crew. When caught early, it typically hasn’t spread.

Many doctors believe tests that detect breast cancer, like mammograms, can save thousands of lives every year. But there’s controversy about what the guidelines should be.



Racing for a breast-cancer cure, in memory of her friend

The American Cancer Society recommends yearly mammograms beginning at age 45—and for women at high risk, an annual mammogram along with MRI. But not everyone agrees. “There is no consensus about whether screening average-risk women ages 40 to 49 years is beneficial,” says Crew.

Some doctors advise breast self-exams, but many do not. Some organizations, such as the American Cancer Society, don’t recommend

them, citing lack of evidence that they are effective.

“It’s important to recognize symptoms, such as breast lumps,” says Crew, noting that is especially true for young women who don’t get regular screenings. Other symptoms include breast pain, nipple pain, swelling, skin irritation, redness, nipple retraction, and nipple discharge. Many experts urge women to know their bodies and if something doesn’t feel right, talk to a doctor.

Sadly, Martinez had symptoms—pain in her side and back—but put off seeing a doctor. With a recent work promotion, new apartment, and budding relationship, her life was on overdrive. “Everything was more important than these little nagging aches and pains,” Union recalls. By the time Martinez saw a doctor, her cancer was already in a late stage.

Cindy Fletcher, who runs an outreach program to Latinas for the breast cancer foundation Susan G. Komen, says this is common. “Women are so concerned about everyone else in their lives, they don’t take the time to care about themselves,” she says. She adds that in communities she works with, women often face a host of barriers to care, like language and cultural differences,

“I get mammograms once a year.
I started getting them in my 30s,
due to Kristen. Yes, it’s uncomfortable.
But it can literally save your life.”

insurance gaps, limited access, and misinformation. “Their screening rate is less. So they may be detecting it later,” she says.

Unfortunately, late detection can be particularly devastating to women like Martinez, who was young and Latina. “On average, younger women tend to have more aggressive breast cancers,” says Crew. When Latina women are diagnosed with breast cancer, they tend to have more advanced-stage tumors. While African-American women tend to have lower breast cancer rates than Caucasians, they’re more likely to die from the disease.

Several organizations are pushing to get the word out to groups at particular risk. Komen funds over 530 programs to educate, screen, diagnose, and treat the Latina community. Young Survival Coalition recently created a diversity strategy to promote outreach to the Latina, African-American, and LGBT communities.

Union joined the cause early on. In 2008, she became a Global Ambassador for Komen, leveraging her celebrity to raise awareness about breast cancer and encourage others to join the cause. She appeared in pub-



Union with husband Dwyane Wade and his sons and nephew

lic service announcements to educate and urge women to get screenings. The same year, she joined Komen to open Ghana’s first breast health hospital.

After losing Martinez, Union continued full steam ahead. In 2010, she formed “Gabby’s Circle of Promise,” a Race for the Cure team in her friend’s honor. And in 2012, she became a spokesperson for Planned Parenthood, launching an initiative to encourage more women to get screened for breast cancer.

FAMILY AFFAIR

Today Union continues to advocate for women’s health. She works with Planned Parenthood to promote affordable wellness programs and runs Komen’s Race for the Cure whenever possible. Her cause work is more challenging now because her schedule is packed solid. She’s filming the fourth season of *Being Mary Jane* and has three movies coming out: *The Birth of a Nation*, *Almost Christmas*, and *Sleepless*. She is also launching a line of watches for Invicta and has her own wine label, Vanilla Puddin.

When she’s not working, she’s in full-on family mode.

In 2014, she married professional basketball player Dwyane Wade. So far, she says, things are going smashingly. “He’s my best friend—at least right now. Talk to me in a few years,” she says with a laugh.

Not only is Union a new wife, she’s also a new mom. When she and Wade tied the knot, she became a stepmom to his sons Zaire, 14, and Zion, 9, and his nephew Dahveon, 15. “I lucked out. They’re loving kids that are appreciative of my consistency,” she says. “Being a stepparent is probably one of the more thankless jobs. It’s hard to figure out: How much do I do? When do I pull back? It’s a very challenging tap dance.”

With Wade’s recent transfer to the Chicago Bulls, the entire brood is in the midst of a major transition—relocating from Miami to the Midwest. Union says it’s particularly daunting for Zaire and Dahveon, who just entered high school. But she says they’re up for it—and she’ll be there to ease them over the bumps.



Union, with Navia Ziraili Robinson, in an episode of *Being Mary Jane*

A LASTING LEGACY

While Union is committed to her family and career, she stops short of neglecting herself. “I set boundaries,” she says. “I want to make sure I’m as healthy as possible.”

To stay fit, Union works out with a personal trainer. A favorite calorie-crusher is a basketball-themed workout that taps her competitive spirit—perfect for the athletic Union, who played basketball and soccer and ran track in high school.

WHO GETS BREAST CANCER?

One in 8 women develops breast cancer. It’s rare in women younger than 40—about **1 in 300**.

Still, **nearly 13,000** women 40 or younger are diagnosed every year. It’s the most common cancer in women **ages 15 to 39**. Young women often have risk factors like family history.

Caucasian women are **slightly more likely** to develop breast cancer than African-American women. African-American women age 35 or younger are **twice as likely** to develop it and **three times** more likely to die compared with same-age Caucasian women. Latinas tend to be diagnosed **earlier** but at more advanced stages. LGBT women have **higher rates** than heterosexual women.

Men can have breast cancer too. About **2,350** men are diagnosed every year.

She visits her doctor regularly and checks on anything that doesn’t feel right. “Some could say I’m a hypochondriac,” she says. “I investigate everything—any aches, pains, creaks. I’ll go see doctors and specialists. I’m like, If I’m paying for this insurance, I’m going to use it—all of it.”

Her breast health is no exception. “I get mammograms once a year. I started getting them in my 30s, due to Kristen. I just wanted to stay on top of it. Yes, it’s uncomfortable. Yes, it’s a little weird. But it can literally save your life,” she says.

If there’s one lesson Union learned from her friend, it’s that no matter how busy her life gets, no matter how difficult it can be to carve out time, neglecting her health simply is not an option. “I prioritize my own health,” Union says. “I have to make sure my health is great—so I’m around to help my family.”

Reviewed by **Brunilda Nazario, MD**, WebMD Lead Medical Editor

**GABRIELLE’S
HEALTHY
LIVING TIPS**

1 Try Pilates
“I started doing Pilates for *Bad Boys 2* and I just loved how my body transformed. I zone out, find that little bit of peace for an hour, then go back to my crazy life.”

2 Drink water
“I drink a gallon of water a day. It’s actually not as hard as it sounds. Yes, you’re going to the bathroom all the time, but it is the best thing.”

3 Banish sugary drinks
“Coffee drinks? They’re like a whole day’s worth of calories. Some of us need that jolt of caffeine, but we can get it with an espresso or black coffee.”

the CANINE

CONNECTION

Cancer can strike our furry friends too. Fortunately, recent research has led to treatment advances that help ailing dogs live longer and happier lives—and offer hope for humans as well. BY R. SCOTT RAPPOLD

Photographs by Tiffany Hagler-Geard



W

WHEN MARISA ROCKWELL OF GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT, TOOK HER DOG TO A VETERINARIAN IN OCTOBER 2014, SHE SUSPECTED SOME SORT OF URINARY TRACT INFECTION. VALO, A PIT BULL MIX, HAD TROUBLE PEEING.

But the diagnosis was much worse: bladder cancer, two types. The vet gave Valo six months to live, a devastating prognosis for Rockwell, who'd had him for a decade. So when she heard about an experimental study on canine cancer at a nearby veterinary clinic, she signed up.

"I said, 'If there's no cure for either of these cancers already, we might as well try something that's not been tried before,'" she says. Valo received two shots and follow-up testing, then returned home.

Ten months later, Valo showed no signs of illness. When he died in May 2016, he'd survived end-stage cancer for a year longer than expected.

Scientists hope that the experimental vaccine, which works by inducing the animals' bodies to make their own monoclonal antibodies to fight cancerous tumors, could one day play a role in treating the disease in humans.

"The data look good. We're excited about the results of phase 1 of the study and we're looking to move on to a phase 2," says Gerald Post, DVM, an oncologist at the Veterinary Cancer Center in Norwalk, Connecticut, who conducted the research with Mark Mamula, PhD, a professor at Yale School of Medicine.

DOGS HELP FIND ANSWERS

The clinical trial that included Valo is one of many around the country focusing on cancer in dogs. Humans and dogs share much more than living spaces. Research shows they share 85% of the same DNA, in part the result of exchanging viruses over tens of thousands of years of cohabitation.

looking for answers

RESEARCHERS AT THE VETERINARY CANCER NETWORK IN NORWALK, CONNECTICUT, TREAT DOGS WITH CANCER TO UNDERSTAND THE DISEASE BETTER

When cancer strikes, humans and dogs share similarities as well. For example, tumors associated with lymphoma, the most common cancer among dogs, are genetically similar to lymphoma in humans. Dogs also develop many forms of cancer spontaneously, as humans do, making them better test subjects than mice in some cases.

Canine research isn't confined to cancer, with studies around the U.S. exploring such areas as spinal cord injuries, aging, and whether having a pet dog makes people healthier. But unlocking the mysteries of cancer, from testing new drugs to trying to understand why benign lumps turn into malignant tumors, may pose the greatest potential benefits for humans and dogs, health experts say.

The American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation has funded some 30 trials in the past 16 years. Meanwhile, veterinarian researchers at 22 universities around the nation have formed the Comparative Oncology Trials Consortium to share information and cooperate in clinical trials on cancer in dogs, with the goal of better understanding and treating cancer in people.

And the results are real. "A handful of products have been added to the market that were initially tested in dogs. There are many more in the pipeline," says Arlene Weintraub, journalist and author of the new book *Heal*, about comparative oncology between dogs and humans. For instance, she points to Palladia, the first FDA-approved cancer drug for pets, and says the canine trials that led to it were important in the development of a human version, Sutent (sunitinib malate).



BY THE NUMBERS

\$1.8 million
The American Kennel Club has dedicated about \$1.8 million in 2016 to fund 13 oncology trials, seven of which involve pet dogs.

\$3 million
The National Cancer Institute this year made \$3 million in grant money available for cancer specialists and veterinarians in several locations to study immunotherapy and canine tumors.

6 million
Among the 65 million pet dogs in the U.S., 6 million cancer cases are diagnosed each year, according to the National Cancer Institute.

22 schools
The National Cancer Institute partners with 22 veterinary schools around the country, making up the Comparative Oncology Trials Consortium.

Comparative oncology offers great potential to treat and someday cure cancer. Why is this research so important? Statistics show that 1 in 4 men and 1 in 5 women in the U.S. will die from cancer. Dogs are similarly susceptible to spontaneous, naturally occurring cancers. By studying cancer in dogs, scientists can develop medicines and therapies that may one day benefit human cancer patients.

COMPARATIVE ONCOLOGY IN CONTEXT



**cutting-edge
treatment**

DOGS IN CLINICAL
TRIALS HAVE ACCESS
TO THE LATEST TESTS
AND EXPERIMENTAL
DRUG THERAPIES

Researchers have also begun human trials on PAC-1, which causes cancer cells to self-destruct, following successful results from canine studies.

The vaccine that researchers gave to Valo and other dogs in the Connecticut cancer study doesn't even have a name yet. Of the 20 dogs enrolled in that study, five are still alive, Post says. But that's only part of the story. All had end-stage cancer and the study wasn't meant to focus on survivability, Post adds. Rather, researchers wanted to see how the dogs would respond to a vaccine developed and first tested in mice by Yale School of Medicine.

Post says the study is a new take on monoclonal antibody drugs that doctors have used in humans. The vaccine spurs the plasma cells in the dog's immune system to create tumor-fighting antibodies.

"Instead of making the antibodies externally, we have hopefully figured out a way to make the body make them itself," Post says.

The initial results were encouraging. The dogs' bodies responded and developed antibodies; researchers added 24 more cancer-stricken dogs to the trial from the fall of 2015 through early 2016. About half of these are still alive, Post says. Researchers hope to have a post-trial study published by the end of this year.

Post aims to secure grant funding by the end of 2016 for phase 2, which will focus on dosing and the dogs' survivability and quality of life.

A GLOBAL INITIATIVE

Post's canine clinical trial is part of the One Health Initiative, a global movement based in the U.S., that aims to look at all aspects of human, animal, and environmental health. Studying the link between animal and human diseases is a major goal of this international consortium of scientists and physicians. For example, researchers at Mississippi State University see promise in studying blood platelets in dogs with cancer to better understand how the disease spreads and how to stop it.

Diane Brown, DVM, PhD, CEO of the AKC Canine Health Foundation, is quick to differentiate this

work from animal testing. "Sometimes people think, 'Oh, this is about owners who are dropping their dogs off for research purposes,' and that's not the case at all. These are dogs that belong to people, that continue to be cared for and live in their homes," Brown says. Their cancer is treated as it would be normally—the difference is that "veterinary specialists, who are running trials, have access to all the latest tests and MRIs and equipment. The dogs just happen to be having samples taken or having drug therapy that is still experimental."

Another benefit is that some find solace in knowing their pets can help humans. "I don't know if he will be cured, because the tumor is quite large," Rockwell, Valo's owner, said several months before her dog died. But "in a way, he is making his little mark on history."

Reviewed by **Arefa Cassoobhoy, MD, MPH**
WebMD Medical Editor



Read **Advances in Cancer Research**, an article at WebMD.com.
[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)



FOOD

IN SEASON

Super Snack

Bite into a crisp, juicy apple, and you may indeed keep the doctor away. “The combination of fiber and water in apples helps you feel full, which can be really helpful with getting to and staying at a healthy weight,” says Alice Bender, MS, director of nutrition programs and a registered dietitian at the American Institute for Cancer Research. Weight control is key to reducing your risk of cancer and heart disease. In addition, apples offer vitamin C and beneficial plant chemicals such as quercetin (which has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties) and triterpenoids (which may prevent out-of-control cell growth, preliminary studies suggest). Many of those compounds are located in or near the skin, so don’t peel apples before you munch. And with the host of different varieties in markets right now, Bender says, “everybody can find one they like.” Check out our a-peeling apple recipes on the next pages.

— **Erin O'Donnell**

**Recipes by
Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD, LD**



Sign up for **The Daily Bite Newsletter** at WebMD.com and get featured recipes from WebMD's Healthy Recipe Finder.

[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)

The top apple-growing states are Washington, New York, and Michigan.

Wrap Star

This wrap makes a lovely lunch, and looks especially appealing when made with red-skinned apples. To get the biggest health benefits, leave skin on. Kitchen tip: Soaking the raw red onion in cold water for a few minutes will mellow out the flavor.

Turkey Apple Wrap With Yogurt Dressing

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

DRESSING

½ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
1 tbsp honey mustard
½ tsp sea salt
freshly ground black pepper to taste

SANDWICH

6 (6–8 inch) whole wheat wraps or tortillas
6 large bibb lettuce leaves
12 oz sliced turkey breast
6 (1 oz) slices low-fat Swiss cheese
1 large red apple, cored and thinly sliced
1 avocado, sliced
½ cup shredded carrots
½ red onion, sliced thin

Directions

1. Make dressing: In a small bowl, whisk together yogurt, honey mustard, salt, and pepper. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl of ice water, soak onion for 10 minutes; remove and dry. Slice thin.
3. To construct wraps, spread dressing on one side of each tortilla. Layer on lettuce, turkey, cheese, apple, avocado, carrots, and onion. Fold in the sides and roll up the wraps. Cut in half and serve.

Per serving

308 calories, 31 g protein, 32 g carbohydrate, 7 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 57 mg cholesterol, 6 g fiber, 7 g sugar, 305 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 23%



 email this recipe!

One medium apple contains 95 calories.

 WebMD.com

What's Cooking!

Thousands of people turn to **WebMD.com** for meal inspiration every day. Here are the most-clicked recipes.*

Tomato, Onion, and Cucumber Salad
BLT Salad

Roasted Zucchini and Pesto
Easy Cherry Berry Cheesecake Cobbler

Lemon Dill Chicken
Pork Tacos With Pineapple-Bell Pepper Salsa

*August 1, 2016

An estimated 2,500 varieties of apples grow in the United States.



email
this
recipe!

Try a Little Tenderloin

This recipe provides a delectable twist on a beloved fall combo. We use Granny Smith apples, but any variety will work.

Roasted Pork Tenderloin With Apple Onion Compote

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 pork tenderloins, 1 lb each
- ½ tsp sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 tsp fresh thyme plus sprigs for garnish
- 1 large onion
- 2 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, sliced ½-inch thick
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- ¼ cup unsweetened apple juice or cider

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Heat olive oil in a large nonstick oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Season pork with salt and pepper. Sear pork on all sides until browned; remove to plate.
3. Add thyme, onion, and apple slices to pan and sauté until golden, about 5 minutes. Place pork atop apple mixture. Place in oven and bake 10–15 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer registers 145°F. Remove pork from oven and cover with foil for at least 10 minutes.
4. Combine mustard, maple syrup, and apple cider in a small bowl. Return skillet to medium-high heat, add apple cider mixture to apple-onion mix, and cook until slightly reduced. Place apple compote on plate and top with slices of pork. Garnish with sprigs of fresh thyme and serve.

Per serving

289 calories, 31 g protein, 17 g carbohydrate, 10 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 97 mg cholesterol, 1 g fiber, 13 g sugar, 302 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 32%

Warm It Up

Nothing completes a fall meal like warm apple crisp. Whole grain oats and nuts add protein and more fiber.

Fall Apple Crisp

Makes 8 servings

Ingredients

- 6 cups peeled, cored, chopped apples (2–3 lbs)
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ⅔ cup packed light brown sugar, divided
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- ¼ tsp lemon zest
- 1½ cups oats
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans
- 3 tbsp cold trans-fat-free margarine, cut into small pieces

Directions

1. Heat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, toss apples with cinnamon, 2 tbsp brown sugar, lemon juice, and zest.
2. Place mixture in a 13x9-inch baking dish, coated with cooking spray.
3. In a small bowl, mix oats, flour, nuts, remaining brown sugar, and margarine; combine thoroughly with a fork.
4. Layer topping over the apple mixture; lightly coat with cooking spray. Bake 30–40 minutes, until golden brown. Serve warm.

Per serving

334 calories, 8 g protein, 54 g carbohydrate, 11 g fat (3 g saturated fat), 11 mg cholesterol, 6 g fiber, 25 g sugar, 36 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 28%

Good varieties for cooking and baking apples include Jonagold, Pippin, and Granny Smith apples.



email
this
recipe!

BREAKFAST SMARTS



TRY A TACO FOR BREAKFAST

SMALLER THAN A BREAKFAST BURRITO BUT JUST AS SATISFYING, A BREAKFAST TACO IS A MORNING MEAL THAT SATISFIES ON ALL FRONTS: FLAVOR, NUTRITION, AND CONVENIENCE.

Make one in a few simple steps:

1. Place two small corn tortillas on a large plate. Spread each with a couple tablespoons of black beans. Pop into the microwave for 20 seconds.

2. Meanwhile, add a drizzle of olive oil to a small nonstick pan heated to medium-hot. Crack an egg in the pan and use a spatula to fold and cut into the egg as it cooks—you're essentially scrambling it in the pan.

3. While the egg is still a bit runny, add a handful of baby spinach or

Reviewed by
Hansa Bhargava, MD
WebMD Medical Editor

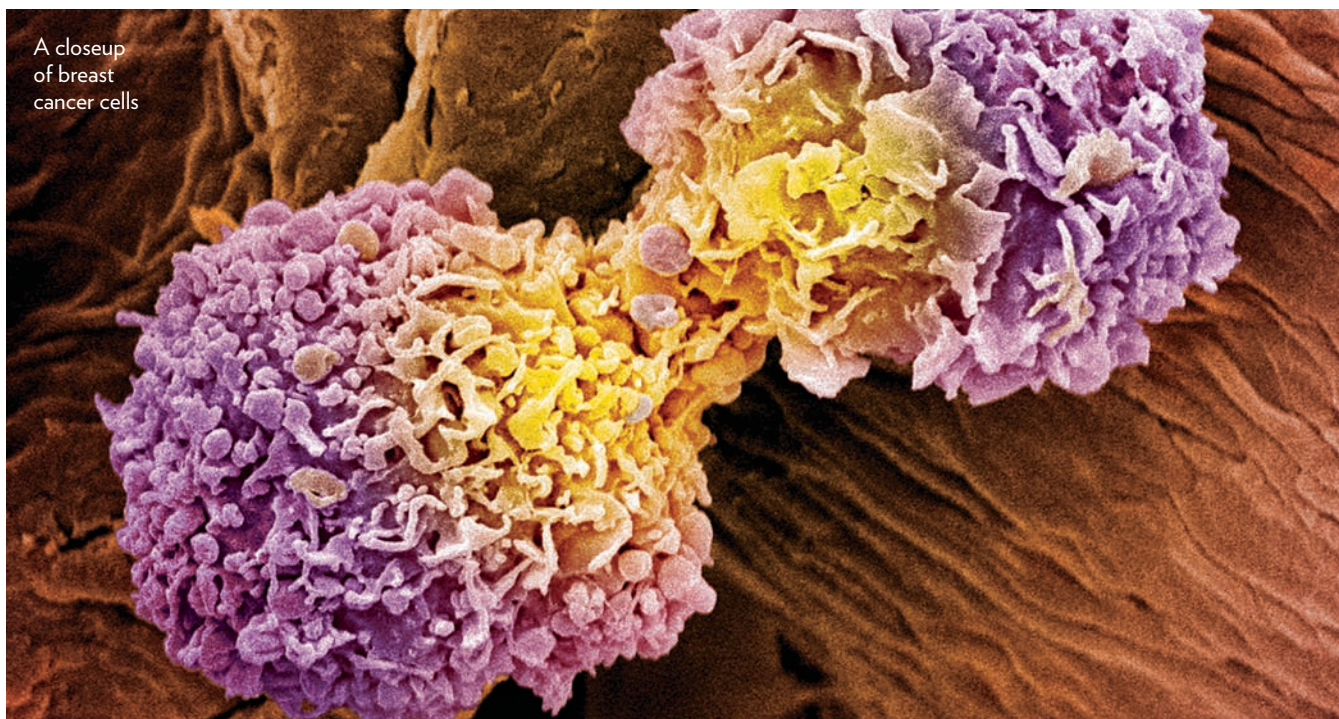
arugula. Cook the egg and greens until the greens are wilted and egg is cooked. Divide the mixture between the tortillas. Add slices of avocado and some hot sauce or salsa.

You can make lots of variations, depending on what you have on hand. Have leftover cooked greens, mushrooms, or other veggies from last night's dinner? Add that to the pan. Feel like tofu rather than eggs? Scramble it up. You can also add crumbled chorizo, and herbs and spices—cumin and oregano work well. —*Kerri-Ann Jennings*

WebMD[®] Checkup

TAKING CARE, LIVING WELL

A closeup
of breast
cancer cells



New Discoveries in Breast Cancer Research

Breast cancer is one of the most researched cancers of all. Three new studies show promise for the future of prevention and treatment

1. Drinking raises risk. At the University of Houston, biologists found a potential link between alcohol intake and breast cancer. When researchers added alcohol to breast cancer cells, BRAF—a gene that promotes the disease—kicked into overdrive. At the same time, alcohol weakened the cancer drug Tamoxifen's ability to fight the disease. These findings could help doctors advise patients about alcohol intake.

2. Radiation therapy just got simpler. Traditional radiation therapy requires multiple appointments, where radiologists use large machines to deliver radioactive beams. While the treatment kills cancer cells, painful skin problems can occur as a result. Now, with microseed therapy, tiny seed-like devices implanted

in the breast after the cancer is removed release radiation for two months to help prevent recurrence. This method is already a standard treatment for prostate cancer.

3. New NASA research shows promise. Researchers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California inspect spacecraft for microbes before they send them out in space. This protects other parts of the solar system from earthly bacteria. Now they've teamed up with cancer experts to test breast duct fluid for microbes using the same methods. The team compared bacteria in the breast fluid of women with and without cancer and found that it differed greatly between the two groups. This could lead to studies on the role of bacteria in causing or preventing cancer. —Sonya Collins



LIVING WELL

HELP FOR BIPOLAR DEPRESSION

HEALTHY HABITS CAN PREVENT THE LOWS FROM KEEPING YOU DOWN

By Christina Boufis



● When she was 19, Laura Riordan was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a brain condition characterized by extreme mood swings—periods of highs (called mania) and lows of depression.

“During periods of depression, I’ve had really dark days where I didn’t want to be alive,” Riordan says. “I’d sleep 18 to 20 hours some days. I really didn’t function for months. I’d be holed up in bed, not showering for three or four days and not even able to make my own food.”

“For anyone living with the condition, they tend to spend a lot more time in the downs than the ups,” explains Eric A. Youngstrom, PhD, professor of psychology and neuroscience, and psychiatry, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. But “recovery is possible with bipolar disorder,” he says.

Partner with a mental health expert.

Because bipolar depression can resemble other conditions, see your doctor or mental health professional to get a correct diagnosis.

“Even though the depression looks similar [to regular depression], it doesn’t respond the same to treatments,” says Youngstrom, acting director of UNC’s Center for Excellence in Research and Treatment of Bipolar Disorder. Talk to an expert about medication or types of therapy that may be right for you.

Get moving.

“Exercise helps,” Youngstrom says. In addition to releasing endorphins (feel-good chemicals in the body), exercise helps reduce inflammation.

“We’re starting to suspect that inflammatory processes—chemical changes that trigger swelling of blood vessels throughout the body, including the brain—are a core feature of bipolar disorder,” Youngstrom says.

Exercising and eating heart-healthy meals, which are good for reducing inflammation in general, may ease symptoms of bipolar depression, he adds. But avoid drugs and alcohol: Both can worsen the disease and make treatment more difficult.

Get regular sleep.

“Sleep is crucial,” as many people with bipolar condition “have a very sensitive, very delicate internal clock that’s easy to knock out of tune,” Youngstrom explains.

Practice good sleep hygiene, such as going to bed and waking up at the same time. “Get the electronics out of the bedroom, and get off your e-reader or cellphone at least 90 minutes before bed,” Youngstrom says.

Consider a supplement.

Research shows that omega-3 fatty acids help reduce symptoms of bipolar depression. While they’re not a cure, Youngstrom says, “they’re likely to be helpful in prevention or extending the amount of time that you stay well between flare-ups.”

As for Riordan, now 35, she’s doing well with medication and lifestyle changes. Going to a weekly support group has been crucial, she says. “Exercise is a huge help, even just getting out for a walk and getting some sunshine.”

And she has found it helpful to write notes to herself about what works during periods when she is feeling better. “It may sound silly,” she says. “But when you’re feeling depressed, you can’t really remember anything that works.”

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

1. Do I have bipolar depression?
2. What medications can help me?
3. What kind of exercise is right for me?
4. Can supplements help?
5. How can I improve my sleep?



Check out **ADHD in Women and Girls**, a slideshow at WebMD.com.

[LEARN HOW ON PAGE 4](#)

MY STORY

MY LIFE WITH ADHD

A READER SHARES HOW MEDICATION AND A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM HELPED HER TO SUCCEED

By Katherine Firestone, WebMD.com community member



I remember feeling like an impostor when I was younger. I was held back in second grade. In high school, though I was in a lot of higher-level classes, I always felt like I was working harder than anyone else. Reading took much longer for me, it seemed. I'd read a paragraph and think, "I have no clue what I just read." I'd skip ahead, never read directions, and made a lot of careless mistakes.

In my junior year of high school, I was taking two Advanced Placement courses and was on the soccer and dance teams. I'd get home after practice and would have a ton of homework and no idea where to start. I had no organization or time management skills, no ability to prioritize. I'd get started on one subject and think, "This is taking forever. I'm never going to get any of this done." Then I'd be paralyzed and stress out, cry, take a break, and come back and be even more

stressed because I hadn't gotten anything done.

That's when my mom took me to see a psychologist, and I was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. I was 17. My doctor prescribed medication, and my mom hired what would now be called an executive functions coach.

My coach taught me how to plan my time. She had me organize every 15 minutes of my day. She showed me that I could complete all my work and explained strategies for reading to help me remember things better, like previewing chapters and not just jumping ahead. She taught me to break big tasks into small ones, how to stop procrastinating, prioritize, start a task, focus, and finish. I started using a planner to organize everything. The medication helped as well.

I'm also really lucky to have an amazing family who was very supportive. My mom would copy pages from my textbooks because

KATHERINE'S KEYS

"For me, not feeling like a failure and taking the medication when I need it are key."

"I can't say enough about having a really great support system. I had great teachers. My parents and my husband have been very supportive."

"Being self-aware and embracing all parts of myself, including the ADHD, has been very important in my success."

"Practicing executive function skills was a huge part of my success. Know that adults can have coaches, too."

I couldn't write in them, and then she'd sit with me as a silent partner while I worked.

I continued to take medication through my junior year of college and apply the executive function skills I'd learned. I became a teacher and then an executive functions coach, where I taught kids how they could improve the skills that I had learned. I'm 30 now and run my own company, an educational nonprofit that helps parents improve the academic lives of their children.

Once I was diagnosed, it kind of empowered me to think, "So I have ADHD. I'm smart and capable. I have something that's holding me back, but I can create strategies to help me overcome it." I don't feel like an impostor anymore.

HEALTH CHECK

WHAT'S YOUR BACK PAIN IQ?

QUIZ

1. To avoid further injury, call a doctor right away if your back is in pain.
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Plenty of bed rest and relaxation is the best cure.
☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Heat or cold can help some people with low back pain.
☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Surgery can help all types of back pain.
☐ Yes ☐ No

Answers: **1. Yes**, but only in certain circumstances. Try self-care for a couple of days if pain is persistent yet mild. But don't hesitate to call your doctor if pain is severe or if you have a fever. Call 911 if you have back pain with chest pain, you fell or suffered a severe blow, you are vomiting, or you have weakness, tingling, or numbness in your legs.

2. No. Don't stay in bed more than a couple of days. Getting up and moving about some will speed your recovery. **3. Yes.** Right after the injury, cold from an ice pack or other source can be applied for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat every two hours as needed for the first two or three days. After that, heat from a hot pack or other source can be applied for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Warm baths may also help. **4. No.** Surgery usually helps only certain types of back pain, such as pain caused by a pinched nerve, a compressed spinal cord, or too much movement between the vertebrae (spinal bones). Doctors consider surgery a last-resort treatment.

SOURCES:

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, WebMD Back Pain Health Center



● About 80% of Americans have low back pain at some point—pain that ranges from mild aches to jaw-gritting spasms. Many aren't sure what to do when it hits. "A little while ago, I was cleaning my shower. Suddenly I felt a searing pain in my lower back and I went to my knees," **nikkiporter** writes to the WebMD back pain community. "I painfully made it to my couch where I am lying now, but I am unable to get comfortable. What treatment should I do right now? Hospital? Ice? Heat?" Do you know how to treat back pain?



ASK YOUR DOCTOR

1. What can I do to prevent my back pain from getting worse?
2. Why is my back vulnerable to pain and injury? Is there anything I can do to prevent it?
3. What are my treatment options? Will I need medication or surgery?
4. If you advise surgery, what are the risks? How long does it generally take to recover?

Reviewed by **Brunilda Nazario, MD**, WebMD Lead Medical Editor

BY THE NUMBERS

CANCER

FACTS AND STATS ABOUT TOP HEALTH ISSUES

By Heather Hatfield

- 1 **Breast**
- 2 **Lung**
- 3 **Prostate**

Ranking of most common types of cancers

14,483,830

Number of people in the U.S. today with cancer

1.7

million

Number of cancer deaths averted due to the drop in death rates



66.9%

Percent of people with all types of cancer who have survived 5 years past diagnosis

5-Year Survival Rate

99%
Prostate



89%
Breast



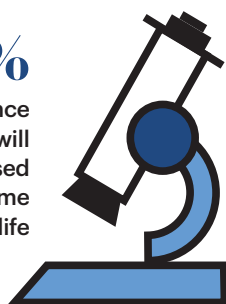
17%
Lung

1.7 million

Approximate number of new cancer cases diagnosed this year

39.6%

Percent chance that a person will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in life



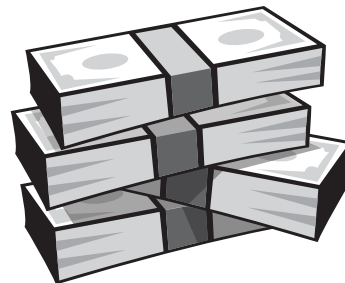
26

Approximate number of new cancer therapies approved in the U.S. during 2015 and 2016



\$125 billion

Annual cost of cancer care in the U.S. today



\$156 billion

Projected annual cost of cancer in the U.S. in 2020

SOURCES: CenterWatch, National Cancer Institute, NIH

Sonequa Martin-Green

Actor and Cancer Activist



“If you’re not taking care of yourself, eating clean and staying hydrated, your body will fail you.”

MATT SAYLES

1 ***The Walking Dead, Season 6 cliff-hanger! Can you tell us if your character Sasha makes it out alive?***

[The character] Negan is a psychopath, and everything changes now that he’s here. The cast is kept in the dark quite a bit. The finale has been shot. I’m not saying anything else!

2 ***It must be gratifying to portray a strong, female African-American character who regularly kicks butt.***

Oh, yeah! I play a strong woman who is very real and also a very vulnerable, well-rounded human being. Women tell me how it’s great for their daughters to see a strong black woman on TV.

3 ***The show feels so authentic because the cast is not emoting inside a studio—you’re shooting outside. How physically taxing is the role?***

This is the most strenuous show I’ve ever worked on, by far. If you’re not taking care of yourself, eating clean and staying hydrated, your body will fail you. It’s a lot of cardio, and we’re in the elements: running, jumping, diving, while shooting in 100-degree weather and 80-percent humidity.

4 ***Do you use a trainer?***
I’m actually just starting with a trainer. Weightlifting is such a centered workout. I love lifting. I’ve done lots of other things in recent years, but weightlifting is a real side passion of mine.

5 ***Are you a health nut, in a health rut, or do you fall somewhere in between?***

I do try to eat lean meats and veggies most of the time, and organic as much as possible. I stay away from dairy, gluten, and sugar as much as possible. I’m a work in progress.

6 ***Name your ultimate “cheat” food.***

I can’t get burgers and fries out of my mind! (Laughs.) At this point I eat them maybe three times a month.

7 ***You’ve recently become an ambassador for Stand Up To Cancer. Why did you get involved in that effort?***

I had to be a part of SUTC. Cancer runs rampant in my family. My mother is

a three-time survivor: first colon cancer, then breast, and then a cancer in her stomach. She is a warrior. One of my sisters recently won her battle with breast cancer. So many of my aunts and uncles and my grandparents on both sides have struggled with it.

8 ***What’s the best health advice anyone ever gave you?***

One of my best friends is a fitness fanatic, and he taught me the responsibility for caring for your body; it’s your most valued possession. He said no matter what success you might amass, if you haven’t cared for your body, you have failed.

9 ***You’re married to fellow actor Kenric Green, with a toddler son at home. Is it tough to strike a healthy work/life balance?***

Man, it’s tough. But I’ve learned it’s a lifelong project. You might have balance in your professional life, or in your family at home. But balance in everything? In yourself? You strive for it your whole life.

10 ***Describe your perfect day.***
It’s at the beach. The weather is 85

degrees with a warm wind. I’m with my husband and son, and we’re enjoying each other and life, playing in the water and the sand. Then we walk around an interesting neighborhood, get some really good food. Once it’s time for the baby to go down, the hubby and I hit the town and have a real good dance party at a reggae club!

—Lauren Paige Kennedy