LIFE by Select Rehabilitation

Living Well, Involved, Fulfilled and Energized

Healthy Living Series

April 2020:
Boosting our Immune System during the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

Resources for Residents, Caregivers and Staff

LIFE by Select Rehabilitation

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Boosting our Immune System during the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

We have seen the importance of a healthy immune system throughout the Coronavirus crisis. A central player in the fight against the coronavirus is our immune system. It protects us against the virus. But sometimes it can turn against us. White blood cells, antibodies, and other components, including organs and lymph nodes, make up the body's immune system. Your immune system helps protect your body from foreign or harmful substances. The age-related decline of immune function is generally associated with an increase in susceptibility to infections as well as in incidence of autoimmune deficits in older adults. People who have a weak immune system can take several steps to maximize their chances of staying healthy and avoiding infections.

1. Practice good hygiene. It is important to wash hands frequently including before, during, and after preparing food; after blowing the nose, sneezing, or coughing; after treating a cut or another open skin wound; and after having contact with someone who is unwell.
2. Manage your stress levels. Stress can weaken the immune system further and make a person more susceptible to illness. Practices that may reduce and manage stress include yoga; meditation; and spending time pursuing your favorite hobbies.
3. Get enough sleep. Lack of sleep disrupts the normal production of white blood cells, a crucial component of the body's immune system. Adults should aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep per day.
4. Eat a healthful diet. Eating a healthful, balanced diet can improve a person's overall well-being. For people with a weak immune system, a diet that is rich in vegetables and fruit, which will provide plenty of nutrients is recommended.
5. Exercise regularly. In addition to strengthening the body, exercise causes the body to release endorphins that reduce stress levels. Those with weak immune systems should be careful not to push themselves too hard as this can weaken the immune system further

How can Therapy help? Seeking professional advice to analyze your unique health situation; can often result in simple solutions to boost your immune system. Your rehab team can identify lifestyle changes that can facilitate staying physically and mentally healthy. In addition, your rehab team can provide practical and helpful information and resources in order to assist in health promotion in your community**.**

For additional information, please contact your Select Rehabilitation Physical, Occupational and Speech therapists.

Boosting our Immune System during the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

We have seen the importance of a healthy immune system throughout the Coronavirus crisis. A central player in the fight against the coronavirus is our immune system. It protects us against the virus. But sometimes it can turn against us. White blood cells, antibodies, and other components, including organs and lymph nodes, make up the body's immune system. The effective function of your immune system peaks at around puberty and gradually declines as we grow older. Many disorders can weaken the immune system and cause a person to become immunocompromised. The age-related decline of immune function is generally associated with an increase in susceptibility to infections as well as in incidence of autoimmune deficits in older adults. Your immune system helps protect your body from foreign or harmful substances. Examples are bacteria, viruses, toxins, and cancer cells. The immune system makes cells and antibodies that destroy these harmful substances.

Age Related Changes in the Immune System

- The immune system becomes slower to respond
  - This increases your risk of getting sick
  - Flu shots or other vaccines may not work as well or protect you for as long as expected
- Autoimmune disorders occur more frequently
  - This is a health condition in which the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy body tissues
- Your body may heal more slowly
  - There are fewer immune cells in the body to bring about healing
- The immune system's ability to detect and correct cell defects also declines
  - This can result in an increased risk of various illnesses such as cancer

Symptoms of a Weak Immune System

- You are likely to get infections more frequently
  - These illnesses might be more severe or harder to treat
  - Infections that people with a weak immune system often get include:
    - Pneumonia
    - Meningitis
    - Bronchitis
    - Skin infections
- Autoimmune disorders
- Inflammation of the internal organs
- Blood disorders or abnormalities, such as anemia
- Digestive issues, including loss of appetite, diarrhea, and abdominal cramping

Decreasing the Risks from Immune System Aging

- Get the flu and pneumonia vaccines, and any other vaccines your health care provider recommends
- Get plenty of exercise
  - Exercise helps boost your immune system
- Eat healthy foods
  - Good nutrition keeps your immune system strong
- Do not smoke
  - Smoking weakens your immune system
- Limit your intake of alcohol
- Look into safety measures to prevent falls and injuries
  - A weak immune system can slow healing

Tips to stay healthy

People who have a weak immune system can take several steps to maximize their chances of staying healthy and avoiding infections.

- Good hygiene
  - Wash hands frequently including:
    - Before, during, and after preparing meals and snacks
    - Before eating
    - After blowing the nose, sneezing, or coughing
    - Before and after treating a cut or another open skin wound
    - After having contact with someone who is unwell
    - After using or helping a child use the bathroom
    - After changing a diaper
    - After touching an animal or animal food or waste
    - After touching garbage
- Avoid people who are sick
  - During the coronavirus, we are all practicing physical and social distancing to drastically reduce our exposure to the virus
  - Other viruses and infectious illnesses can spread from person to person through close contact
  - They can also spread in the water droplets that a person expels into the air when they cough or sneeze
  - Avoid close contact, such as hugging or kissing, with a sick person until the illness resolves
  - Avoid sharing food and beverages with the sick person

- Disinfect household objects
  - Germs that have the potential to cause illnesses can live on some surfaces in the home, such as doorknobs and remote controls
  - A person can reduce the number of germs that inhabit these areas by disinfecting them regularly
- Follow a doctor's advice on vaccines
  - Vaccines can prevent a person from getting seriously ill.
  - Doctors generally recommend that most people stay up to date with their vaccinations
  - People with a weak immune system should check with a doctor which vaccines are safe for them to have and then follow the doctor's recommendations.
  - Doctors may advise a person with a weakened immune system to delay or not receive certain vaccines
  - If a short-term illness or a medication is responsible for the weak immune system, the person may be able to have the vaccine once the illness has resolved
  - Examples of vaccines that doctors may recommend delaying or avoiding include:
    - MMR vaccine against measles, mumps, and rubella
    - Live flu vaccine
    - MMRV vaccine, which combines the MMR vaccine with a varicella (chickenpox) vaccine
    - Rabies vaccine
- Manage stress
  - Stress can weaken the immune system further and make a person more susceptible to illness
  - Practices that may reduce and manage stress include:
    - Yoga
    - Meditation
    - Massages
    - Spending time pursuing hobbies
- Get enough sleep
  - Lack of sleep disrupts the normal production of white blood cells, a crucial component of the body's immune system
  - Adults should aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep per day, while infants and children need between 8 and 17 hours of sleep depending on their age
- Eat a healthful diet
  - Eating a healthful, balanced diet can improve a person's overall well-being
  - For people with a weak immune system, a diet that is rich in vegetables and fruit, which will provide plenty of nutrients is recommended
  - If a person is very immunocompromised, they should take extra steps to avoid foodborne illnesses including:
    - Washing all fruits and vegetables before peeling them

        - Avoiding undercooked meats, fish, and eggs
        - Refrigerating food promptly
- Exercise regularly
    - Regular exercise keeps the body healthy
    - In addition to strengthening the body, exercise causes the body to release endorphins that reduce stress levels
    - Those with weak immune systems should be careful not to push themselves too hard as this can weaken the immune system further

How Can Therapy Help?

- Seeking professional advice to analyze your unique situation; can often result in simple solutions
- Your rehab team can identify lifestyle changes that can facilitate staying physically and mentally healthy
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Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use
at Home, at Play, and Out and About

Germs are everywhere! They can get onto hands and items we touch during daily activities and make you sick. Cleaning hands at key times with soap and water or hand sanitizer is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to those around you.

There are important differences between washing hands with soap and water and cleaning them with hand sanitizer. For example, alcohol-based hand sanitizers don't kill ALL types of germs, such as a stomach bug called norovirus, some parasites, and *Clostridium difficile,* which causes severe diarrhea. Hand sanitizers also may not remove harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and heavy metals like lead. Handwashing reduces the amounts of all types of germs, pesticides, and metals on hands. Knowing when to clean your hands and which method to use will give you the best chance of preventing sickness.

When should I use?

Soap and Water

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the bathroom, changing diapers, or cleaning up a child who has used the bathroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal food or treats, animal cages, or animal waste
- After touching garbage
- If your hands are visibly dirty or greasy

Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer

- Before and after visiting a friend or a loved one in a hospital or nursing home, unless the person is sick with *Clostridium difficile* (if so, use soap and water to wash hands).
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, and wash with soap and water as soon as you can.

* Do **NOT** use hand sanitizer if your hands are visibly dirty or greasy: for example, after gardening, playing outdoors, or after fishing or camping (unless a handwashing station is not available). Wash your hands with soap and water instead.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CS270631

How should I use?

Soap and Water

- **Wet** your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
- **Scrub** all surfaces of your hands, including the palms, backs, fingers, between your fingers, and under your nails. Keep scrubbing for 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- **Rinse** your hands under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities.

- **Apply.** Put enough product on hands to cover all surfaces.
- **Rub** hands together, until hands feel dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

Note: Do not rinse or wipe off the hand sanitizer before it's dry; it may not work as well against germs.

For more information, visit the CDC handwashing website, www.cdc.gov/handwashing.

Mini Nutritional Assessment

MNA®

Nestlé Nutrition Institute

Last name: First name:

Sex: Age: Weight, kg: Height, cm: Date:

Complete the screen by filling in the boxes with the appropriate numbers. Total the numbers for the final screening score.

Screening

A Has food intake declined over the past 3 months due to loss of appetite, digestive problems, chewing or swallowing difficulties?
0 = severe decrease in food intake
1 = moderate decrease in food intake
2 = no decrease in food intake ☐

B Weight loss during the last 3 months
0 = weight loss greater than 3 kg (6.6 lbs)
1 = does not know
2 = weight loss between 1 and 3 kg (2.2 and 6.6 lbs)
3 = no weight loss ☐

C Mobility
0 = bed or chair bound
1 = able to get out of bed / chair but does not go out
2 = goes out ☐

D Has suffered psychological stress or acute disease in the past 3 months?
0 = yes 2 = no ☐

E Neuropsychological problems
0 = severe dementia or depression
1 = mild dementia
2 = no psychological problems ☐

F1 Body Mass Index (BMI) (weight in kg) / (height in m)^2 ☐
0 = BMI less than 19
1 = BMI 19 to less than 21
2 = BMI 21 to less than 23
3 = BMI 23 or greater ☐

IF BMI IS NOT AVAILABLE, REPLACE QUESTION F1 WITH QUESTION F2.
DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION F2 IF QUESTION F1 IS ALREADY COMPLETED.

F2 Calf circumference (CC) in cm
0 = CC less than 31
3 = CC 31 or greater ☐

Screening score ☐☐
(max. 14 points)

12-14 points:	☐	Normal nutritional status
8-11 points:	☐	At risk of malnutrition
0-7 points:	☐	Malnourished

Save Print Reset

Ref. Vellas B, Villars H, Abellan G, et al. *Overview of the MNA® - Its History and Challenges*. J Nutr Health Aging 2006;10:456-465.
Rubenstein LZ, Harker JO, Salva A, Guigoz Y, Vellas B. *Screening for Undernutrition in Geriatric Practice: Developing the Short-Form Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA-SF)*. J. Geront 2001;56A: M366-377.
Guigoz Y. *The Mini-Nutritional Assessment (MNA®) Review of the Literature - What does it tell us?* J Nutr Health Aging 2006; 10:466-487.
Kaiser MJ, Bauer JM, Ramsch C, et al. *Validation of the Mini Nutritional Assessment Short-Form (MNA®-SF): A practical tool for identification of nutritional status.* J Nutr Health Aging 2009; 13:782-788.

For more information: www.mna-elderly.com

Factors to Consider When Evaluating Sleep Problems in Older Adults

Is the patient's complaint predominantly excessive sleepiness, inability to go to sleep at a desired time, early-morning awakening or a combination of these features?

Is total sleep insufficient and is sleep attempted at times that are not synchronous with the patient's circadian rhythm?

Are stressors or environmental factors influencing the sleep-wake cycle, such as a barking dog, ringing telephone, too much light or uncomfortable temperature in the bedroom?

Is an underlying medical or psychiatric illness contributing to the sleep disturbance?

Are stimulating or sedating effects of substances such as caffeine, alcohol and over-the-counter or prescription drugs playing a role in the patient's sleep problems?

Does the patient have a primary sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome or periodic limb movements?

Are poor sleep habits, such as activity other than sleep in bed, irregular sleep-wake times or daytime napping, perpetuating the patient's symptoms?

Source: Neubauer, D., Sleep Problems in the Elderly. *Am Fam Physician.* 1999 May 1;59(9):2551-2558.

Healthy Living Series Talk Follow Up Form

We would like to know if today's topic has been a concern to you which may affect any activities in your day to day life. Please take a moment to complete this questionnaire and indicate if you would like us to contact you regarding your concerns:

Please mark any areas of concern below ⇩	
Daily Activities:	I am concerned about:
Cooking	
Ability to Dress	
Housekeeping	
Laundry	
Shopping	
Hobbies	
Travel	
Church or Temple	
Medication Management	
Bathing/ Hygiene	
Social:	
Remembering appointments	
Going to Friends Homes	
Forgetting names	
Hearing	
Self Perception:	
Physical Health	
Fear of Hygiene Issues	
Fear of Embarrassment	

Please enter your name and phone number if you would like us to contact you:

NAME:_____ NUMBER:_____