

The Buzz



Protecting Your Skin

One step to protecting ourselves from disease and infection is to protect our skin. The skin is the largest organ in the human body and part of its job is to help keep out pathogens. Learn to take good care of your skin, so your skin can keep taking good care of you. “The skin provides a barrier to protect the body from invasion by bacteria and other possible environmental hazards that can be dangerous for human health,” says [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) dermatologist Dr. Heidi Kong](#).

Skin plays other roles, too. It contains nerve endings that let you feel when an object is too hot or sharp, so you can quickly pull away. Sweat glands and tiny blood vessels in your skin help to control your body temperature. Cells found in your skin turn sunlight into vitamin D, which is important for strong bones.

Skin can also be an indicator of health problems. For this reason, it is always important to take notice of changes and consult your medical provider.

Skin can become dry if you dehydrated and/ or you spend too much time in places that are dry and/or sunny. “While washing hands is important for good hygiene, washing your hands too much can also lead to dry skin,” Kong says, especially if you wash with hot water and harsh soaps. To treat dry skin, use moisturizing creams or lotions, and use warm instead of hot water when you bathe and wash your hands. You can also try using a humidifier to increase humidity in your home.

While the [coronavirus 19 \(COVID-19\)](#) can’t enter through the skin people are asked to wash their hands frequently so as to not transmit the virus to mucosal membranes found in our noses, eyes and mouths. Current rec-

ommendations are to wash your hands frequently. So again make sure to use moisturizer frequently too.



The sun can damage your skin as well. Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) light that causes sunburn. [Sunburn](#) is an often painful indication of skin damage from spending too much time in the sun without wearing a protective sunscreen. Years of overexposure to the sun leads to premature wrinkling, aging of the skin, age spots, and an increased risk of skin cancer. “There’s a strong link between UV exposure and skin cancer,” Kong adds. So protect your skin from the sun. Wear hats and other protective clothing.

The [American Academy of Dermatology](#) recommends people wear sunscreen of sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher every time they are outdoors, even on cloudy days.

Dr. Kong and other skin researchers are studying the skin’s microbiome—the bacteria and other microscopic organisms that live on your skin. Some of these microbes can be helpful. Evidence suggests that they boost the body’s infection-fighting immune system and help keep you healthy. “But there are some skin diseases with known associations with certain microbes,” says Kong. “We’re trying to understand how those microbes differ between healthy people and people with skin diseases.” Researchers are looking for ways to boost beneficial microbes and reduce the harmful bacteria.

Take care of your skin and it will take care of you. Learn how with the follow-

ing tips:

NIH Tips for Healthy Skin

- **Wash up.** Bathe in warm—not hot—water; use mild cleansers that don’t irritate; and wash gently—don’t scrub.
- **Block sun damage.** Avoid intense sun exposure, use sunscreen, and wear protective clothing.
- **Don’t use tanning beds or sunlamps.** They emit the same harmful UV radiation as the sun.
- **Avoid dry skin.** Drink plenty of water, and use gentle moisturizers, lotions, or creams.
- **Reduce stress.** Stress can harm your skin and other body systems.
- **Get enough sleep.** Experts recommend about 9 hours a night for teens and 7-8 hours for adults.
- **Speak up.** Talk to your doctor if you notice any odd changes to your skin, like a rash or mole that changes size or color.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Dermatology.

Help us better understand skin care in our community by [Taking this Brief Survey](#).

HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

RIDE TO END ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE- LET'S RIDE TOGETHER – YET APART, JUNE 14

You can now register for this virtual event for free and fundraising is encouraged, but not required. You can earn some special rider perks that they will send you, in advance, and then it's time for all to get creative for what the ride plan will look like on June 14th. Participants will ride together in spirit, even if they can't be together in person.

Virtual Walk to End Epilepsy, thru-June 15. The Walk to End Epilepsy is going virtual. Taking into consideration the health and well-being of event participants, volunteers, staff and the Connecticut community in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual Walk to End Epilepsy will be held May 10 to June 15. Walkers can join the virtual Walk to support epilepsy efforts in Connecticut.

Summer Solstice Trail Run 5.5 mile and 3.3 mile, June 20th at Gay City Park, Hebron. Enjoy a beautiful early morning trail run in Gay City State Park. Choose a 5.5 or 3.3 mile run through the park and surrounding forests. Participants will pass the remains of the old paper mill, cross over the Blackledge River and view many traditional old stone walls in the deep woods. Trails are well maintained but expect some rocks and roots along the way. Be aware, this event may be canceled because of social distancing rules.

In light of the State of Connecticut guidelines related to COVID-19 many events have been postponed or canceled. But, there are still ways you can enjoy local sites. Find some virtual resources at [CTVISIT](#)

Summer is blueberry, strawberry, & raspberry season in CT! Get out and Pick-Your Own at one of the local farms.



Vegetable Enchiladas 6—8 servings

◆ 1 large onion, chopped ◆ 2 garlic cloves, minced ◆ 1 large zucchini, shredded ◆ 1 lb fresh green beans, diced ◆ 1 medium yellow pepper, diced ◆ 2 medium carrots, shredded ◆ 1/2 cup cilantro, coarsely chopped ◆ 15 oz tomato sauce ◆ 1 T chili powder ◆ 8 oz Jack Cheese, shredded ◆ 8 whole wheat tortillas

DIRECTIONS 1. In a large pan over medium heat, cook vegetables (except cilantro) for 15 minutes, until tender crisp. 2. Mix chili powder and tomato sauce; add 1/4 cup to vegetable mixture. Add cilantro to vegetable mixture and mix well. 3. Take 1 tortilla, place about 1 oz of cheese down middle of tortilla, add 1/8 of the vegetable mixture; roll and place seam side down in baking dish. Repeat this step for each tortilla. 4. Top with remaining tomato sauce and bake at 400° for 20 minutes or until bubbly.

Fighting Loneliness, While Maintaining Social Distancing

Strong relationships with friends and family help us thrive. It's easy to feel lonely or isolated when we have few social connections or positive contacts with others. "We can't underestimate the power of a relationship in helping to promote well-being," says NIH psychologist and relationship expert Dr. Valerie Maholmes.

In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, many of us have been spending more time alone in our homes. While anyone can feel lonely, certain factors increase your risk. Major life changes or losses can also increase feelings of loneliness.

Older adults are at greater risk for loneliness because they're more likely to live alone. Mobility issues can make it harder to leave the house. For individuals with sensory issues like vision and hearing loss can contribute to feeling isolated. It is important that everyone old or young, stay socially connected.

Loneliness can cause problems with your health too. It's linked to higher rates of depression and heart disease, and can weaken your immune system. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people who are social isolated are at 50% increase risk for dementia.

Here are some strategies to help stay connected if you're feeling lonely.

Get moving. Exercise has been shown to reduce stress and boost your mood. Whether it's sweating to a workout video or taking a walk around your neighborhood, exercise can help. You may also consider joining a virtual exercise class such as yoga. Don't forget when in public to adhere to social distancing rules.

Adopt a new pet. Animals can be a source of comfort and companionship. Some studies have shown that pets can reduce loneliness, increase feelings of social support and boost your mood. Learn more about the Power of Pets

Computer technology is a great way to connect with friends and family virtually. Try a new interest or hobby with a virtual group such as a music or art. Take time to reach out to others by phone or online.

Source: NIH in the News, CDC

For information on **COVID-19**, including social support consult [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC), and the [CT Department of Public Health](#) and [EHHD.ORG](#)

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Public Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

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