

HEALTH



Hand washing, face masks and gloves, oh my!

Knowing how to properly remove masks and gloves important in fight against COVID-19



Dr. Pamela Tronetti
Special to Florida Today
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Back in medical school, we had multiple training sessions on how to scrub in for surgery, put on and take off our masks properly and when and how to use gloves.

I never thought my patients would need the same training, but COVID-19 changed that. So, welcome to medical school everyone!

The scoop on soap

Soap is an interesting molecule — one end attracts fats and the other end attracts water. That is why soap can break up an oil

slick on water.

One end of the soap molecule attaches to the oil, while the other end pulls toward the water, dispersing the oil slick.

The cell walls of bacteria and viruses are made of fats and proteins. Soap molecules attach to the fats in the cell walls and then pull outward to the surrounding water,

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Hernias don't heal without help; know the signs



Dr. Diego Velarde
Special to Florida Today
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Hernias are a common problem affecting millions of Americans.

Most people are familiar with the term hernia, though they do not understand what they are, why they happen, where, and what treatments are available for this common physical ailment.

With June designated as National Hernia Awareness Month, it is the perfect time to educate on the causes of and effective treatments for hernia patients.

Hernia in its simplest term is a hole where there should not be a hole.

Essentially it is a defect, or an opening through the body or muscle wall which presents as a lump or bulge in the low to mid-stomach region.

Though important to note, hernias can occur in other areas.

Patients can have a herniated disc or a hiatal hernia, which is an opening through the diaphragm.

Patients can also have hernia's in their internal organs.

Though most common are inguinal hernias (groin hernias) and body wall hernias (abdominal hernias).

Further factors for hernias include obesity, chronic coughing or COPD, chronic constipation, smoking, pregnancy and abdominal surgeries, which can make the abdominal wall weak, causing incisional hernias.

An incarcerated hernia occurs when parts of an organ (normally the intestines) protrude through a weak point or tear in the muscular wall holding the abdominal organs.

People at risk of developing hernias are normally those who perform chronic lifting and/or activities that require straining, thus, increasing intra-abdominal pressure.

Abdominal wall hernias are common in both males and females; nearly 2 percent of the population acquire them with 4 percent of those over 45 years of age.

Inguinal hernias, also occurring when abdominal organs protrude



A hernia occurs when tissue, such as part of the intestine, protrudes through a weak spot in the muscles. GETTY IMAGES

through a weak spot in the muscles of the abdomen, account for 75 percent of abdominal wall hernias with nearly 30 percent diagnoses in men and only 3 percent in women.

Umbilicus hernias are also routine in patients and occur when the hole is at the umbilicus; a natural weakness from

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Educating family important for Alzheimer's patients



Dr. Sue Mitra
Guest columnist

Millions of caregivers give countless hours of their valuable time to care for their loved ones with Alzheimer's disease.

Educating family, friends and co-workers to recognize the necessity of Alzheimer's treatment is especially important year round.

Dementia is an acquired chronic impairment of memory and other aspects of intellect that impedes daily functioning.

Mild cognitive impairment describes cognitive decline greater than expected for age but without interference with daily functioning.

Alzheimer's disease is the most prevalent form of dementia, accounting for 60 to 80 percent of cases.

Characteristic findings of Alzheimer's disease are memory loss, confusion, difficulty concentrating, difficulty finding words, getting lost, difficulty with dressing and grooming, and doing housework, mood, and personality changes, become confused, depressed, poor judgment or decision-making.

Causes may include a combination of environmental, genetic and lifestyle factors.

Individuals with a family member suffering from Alzheimer's are more likely to develop this disease.

There remains growing evidence for possible dietary risk factors in the development of Alzheimer's and cognitive decline.

People who follow a primarily plant-



People with Alzheimer's and their caregivers are facing additional obstacles due to the pandemic. GETTY IMAGES

based diet, such as fruits and vegetables, olive oil, fish, legumes, and whole grains and are less likely to have Alzheimer's disease.

Antioxidants can protect the brain from oxidative and inflammatory damage.

Early detection of dementia at the primary care level can help patients get the care they need, and even help slow down disease progression through lifestyle changes and treatment.

When a patient begins exhibiting symptoms of memory loss, a family member or loved one brings them to their doctor to get a memory test.

Medicare annual wellness visits for people over 65 performed by primary

care physicians involve cognition testing — complete memory tests.

Regular follow-ups are a key component in improving the overall value and effectiveness of individual visits.

While diagnosing dementia, delirium must be excluded through a review of medications, signs or symptoms of infection, or metabolic abnormalities.

Depression must also be excluded as well through proper screening measures.

Usual laboratory studies include a CBC, complete metabolic profile, TSH, vitamin B12, UA and RPR.

Imaging such as head CT scan or brain MRI detects nondegenerative causes that would alter management,

such as cerebrovascular disease, neoplasm, or subdural hematoma.

A score of less than 24 on the Mini-Mental state examination (MMSE) is compatible with dementia. Other diagnostic tools include the Montréal cognitive assessment and the "Mini-Cog" test.

Gathering information from patients about their future wishes, or discerning the patient's goals and wishes from family members and caregivers if a patient fails to do so, is truly an art of medicine.

Management of Alzheimer's dementia should focus on essential education and supports for the patient, family and caregivers.

Consider referral to the local Alzheimer's Association for valuable support for families that can provide assistance in planning and solving future problems.

Take appropriate measures in fall prevention and addressing driving abilities in inclusive conversations with patients and family.

Drugs such as acetylcholinesterase inhibitors slow intellectual decline in patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease, whereas memantine to delay cognitive and functional decline in moderate to advanced dementia (MMSE 3-14).

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month.

Please spread the word about the importance of brain health and wear purple this month.

Together, we can make a huge difference between action and awareness.

Dr. Sue Mitra can be reached at 321-622-6222 or info@suemitra.com. Call now to assess your brain health and take action early on.

Latest in cancer prevention: Move more, ditch beer and bacon

Serena Gordon
HEALTHDAY NEWS

The latest cancer prevention guidelines may change your typical backyard barbecue: Gone are the hot dogs and booze. In are veggie kebobs and maybe a swim or some badminton.

The American Cancer Society's new cancer prevention recommendations suggest, among other things, adding more physical activity to your days. About 20 minutes a day is the minimum, but 40 minutes or more daily is even better.

The new guidelines also add emphasis on avoiding unhealthy foods, including red and processed meats, refined grains and alcohol.

"The new recommendations really increase emphasis on a few key areas [including healthy weight and diet, physical activity, and avoiding or limiting alcohol]," said Dr. Laura Makaroff, senior vice president of prevention and early detection for the American Cancer Society (ACS).

These factors accounted for up to 18% of cancer cases and 16% of cancer deaths in the United States, according to the new report.

Along with recommendations for individual lifestyle practices, the ACS also included guidance for communities to take action.

"In addition to recommendations for individual choices, ACS recognizes that making healthy choices can be challenging for many people. We need to reduce barriers to living well and achieving a healthy lifestyle, and that will require working collaboratively at all levels to develop and implement policies to ensure access to healthy foods and opportunities for exercise," Makaroff said.

Registered dietician Pat Talio, the



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clinical nutrition outpatient program coordinator at Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco, N.Y., agreed.

"This has to be a community and a societal effort. Given COVID and the amount of money that's been spent on that, it will be especially important to keep focusing on healthy lifestyle," Talio said. "It won't help overall health if communities reduce funding in schools by cutting out gym teachers and sports programs."

The biggest changes to the guidelines

included:

Physical activity. In line with U.S. government recommendations, the ACS guidelines say Americans should get between 150 and 300 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. If you up your activity level to vigorous activity, the ACS advises 75 to 150 minutes a week.

Alcohol. The ACS says your best bet is to skip alcohol altogether. If you chose to drink, limit your alcohol consumption to one drink a day for women or two a

day for men.

Diet. The guidelines recommend not eating, or limiting, foods such as red or processed meats, sugar-sweetened beverages, refined grains and other highly processed foods. The ACS encourages a diet full of a variety of healthy foods, particularly 2.5 to 3 cups of vegetables and 1.5 to 2 cups of fruits each day. The ACS also recommends incorporating legumes and whole grains in your diet.

Along with these changes, the ACS also reconfirmed the importance of maintaining a healthy body weight. Nearly 11% of cancers in women and 5% in men have been linked to being overweight or obese. Only cigarette smoking accounts for a higher percentage of cancer, the guidelines said. Some cancers linked to excess weight include:

- Breast
- Ovary
- Kidney
- Esophagus
- Colon
- Liver
- Gallbladder
- Pancreas

"There is no magic pill for preventing cancer," Talio said. "People say that even though they're not eating all their vegetables, they are taking a supplement. But that's not the same. You have to eat well to get the right nutrients. Have a variety of vegetables and fruits — in all different colors. Concentrate on the vegetables."

The new ACS guidelines are consistent with other government and major health organization recommendations for preventing heart disease and diabetes.

The new guidelines were published June 9 in CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians.

Velarde

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birth since it is located where the umbilical cord was.

These can also present with part of the intestine protruding through the umbilicus and/or abdominal wall, causing the bellybutton to protrude, sometimes referred as "outie."

As hernias increase in size, patients normally begin having pain, or the sensation of fullness.

These symptoms normally get worse with exercise, lifting and/or physical labor.

Occasionally, hernias can be considered emergent when they become confined or stuck.

This process means an internal organ is pushing through the defective hole and cannot be pushed back or reduced;

not a good sign since a potential loop of small-bowel or large intestine can cause bowel obstruction or complete blockage.

This issue not only causes pain, but nausea and vomiting and as a result can cause a low blood supply of the bowel and necrosis (death of body tissue) and infection.

This scenario can be life-threatening and why it is important to have hernias repaired to prevent life-threatening complications.

How to diagnose a hernia

In most cases, a physical exam is needed to determine if a patient has a hernia.

As stated, if a patient is in discomfort, has a lump or a bulge in the groin region or at the site of an incision, you need to see your primary care doctor.

If a physical exam is not conclusive, a

CT scan or ultrasound is ordered.

As a last resource a diagnostic laparoscopy could be performed.

How to treat a hernia

Patients need to understand a hernia will not disappear on its own, and if not repaired will only increase in size.

The larger the hernia the harder it is to repair.

There are no options to remove an inguinal or abdominal wall hernia; only the repair of which is comparable to "patching a tire."

Surgical techniques include open, laparoscopic, and/or robotic procedures using a light thin mesh to repair the area which also decreased the reoccurrence rate.

Laparoscopic and robotic surgery techniques support faster recovery options with less pain and decreased recovery time.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, approximately five million Americans have hernias, with only 750,000 patients seeking treatment.

This lack of medical intervention is dangerous.

Be aware of these typical hernia symptoms mentioned above; leaving problems unchecked can lead to serious medical conditions.

For more information on hernia health, go to www.facs.org

Dr. Diego Velarde is a board-certified, general surgeon and fellowship trained laparoscopic and bariatric surgeon at Advanced Surgical & Weight Loss Institute in Rockledge. He has practiced medicine in Brevard County for more than 15 years; is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and is Chief of Surgery at Melbourne Regional Medical Center.