



HealthNEWS

SPRING 2017

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The Dangers of 'New' Nicotine

Electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, deliver nicotine in vapor instead of smoke. But does that mean they're safer than cigarettes?

With regular cigarettes and cigars, it is the inhalation of nicotine and other toxic substances in the smoke from burning tobacco that can cause major health problems, including cancer and heart disease. E-cigarettes produce an aerosol that looks and feels like smoke, but the potential health effects are not fully known.

The American Lung Association says users of e-cigarettes shouldn't count on them to be healthier than regular cigarettes. Besides nicotine, e-cigarette devices deliver dangerous chemicals such as formaldehyde, benzene and tobacco-specific nitrosamines, all carcinogens.

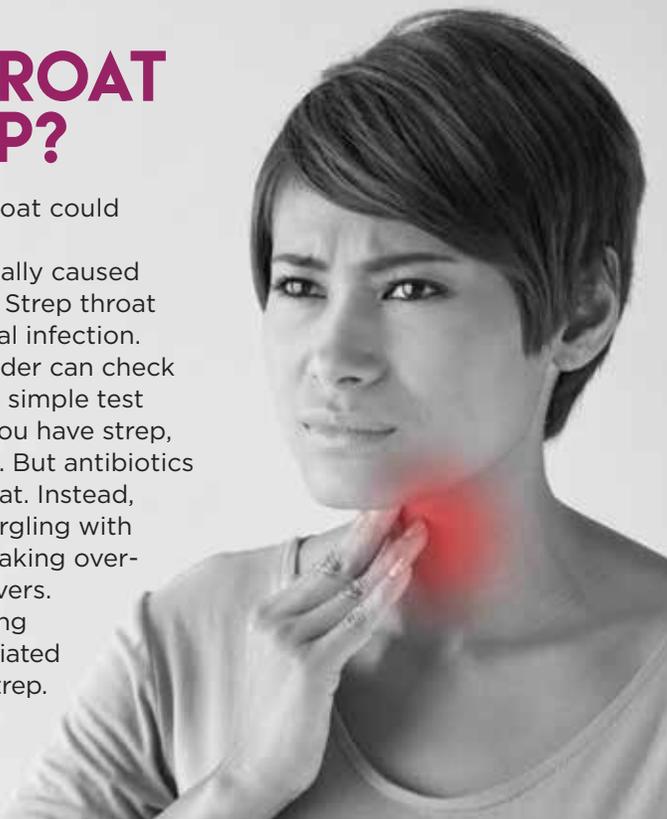
If you're trying to quit smoking, don't turn to e-cigarettes to help. Talk to your doctor or call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at **1.866.NY.QUITS (1.866.697.8487)**.

SORE THROAT OR STREP?

Worried your sore throat could be strep?

Sore throats are usually caused by a virus or allergies. Strep throat is caused by a bacterial infection. Your health care provider can check for strep throat with a simple test done in the office. If you have strep, you'll need antibiotics. But antibiotics won't help a sore throat. Instead, try using lozenges, gargling with warm, salty water or taking over-the-counter pain relievers.

Compare the following symptoms often associated with a sore throat or strep.

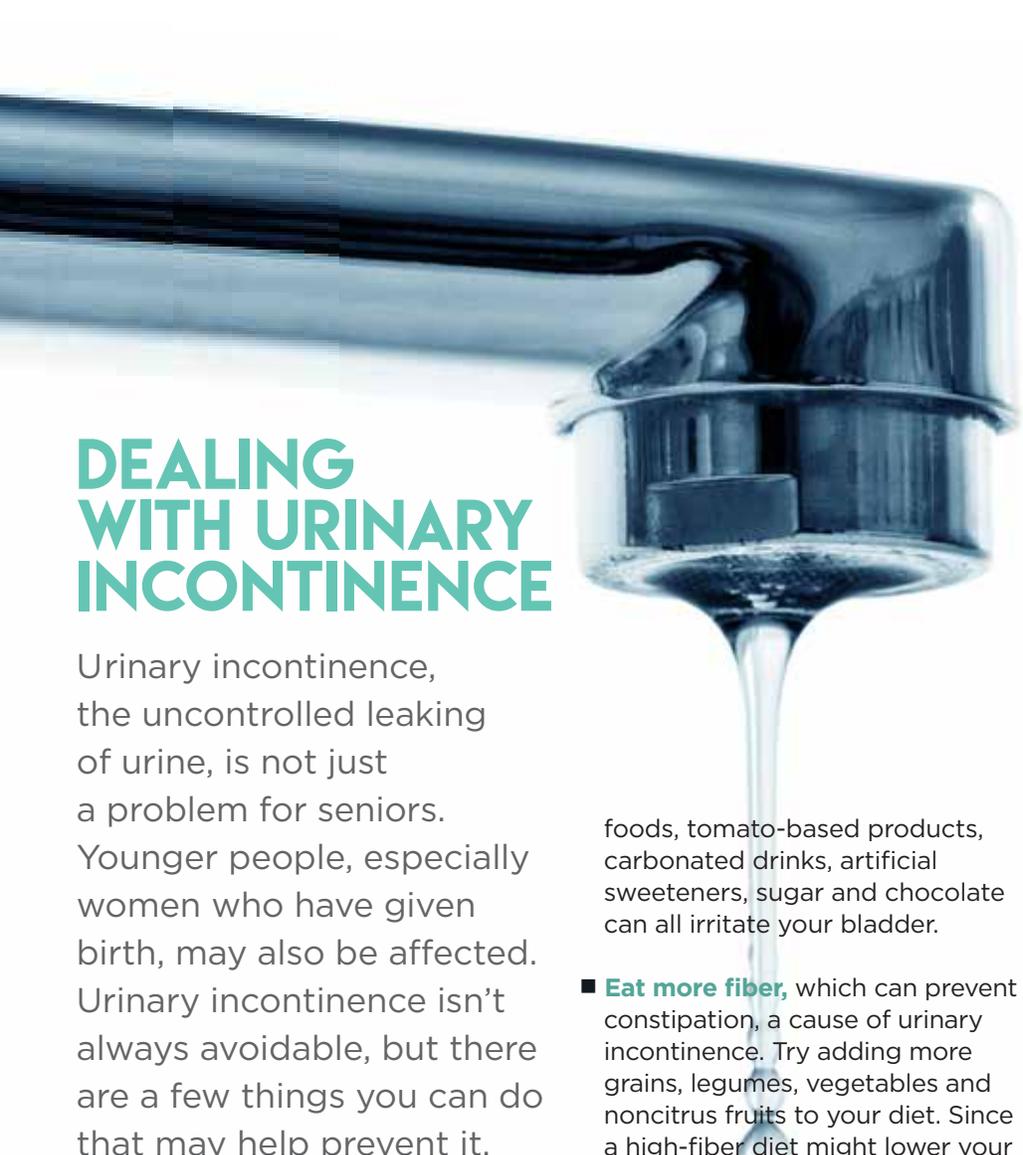


Symptom	Sore Throat	Strep Throat
Fever	Below 101°	101° or above
Coughing	Yes	No
Headache/body aches	Mild	Severe
Red spots on roof of mouth	No	Yes
Red, swollen tonsils	No	Yes
Sneezing/runny nose	Yes	No
Vomiting	No	Yes

When Antibiotics Won't Help

If you come down with a bad cold, don't expect an antibiotic to make you feel better. Antibiotics were developed to treat bacterial infections such as strep throat and urinary tract infections by either killing the bacteria or making it difficult for the bacteria to grow and multiply.

Taking antibiotics for viral infections, which include colds, flu, most sore throats and many sinus and ear infections, won't help and may even be harmful. That's because taking antibiotics when they aren't needed can contribute to antibiotic resistance, creating bacteria that are more able to resist the effects of antibiotics.



DEALING WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE

Urinary incontinence, the uncontrolled leaking of urine, is not just a problem for seniors. Younger people, especially women who have given birth, may also be affected. Urinary incontinence isn't always avoidable, but there are a few things you can do that may help prevent it.

■ **Maintain a healthy weight.**

Obesity increases the risk of UI, so maintaining a healthy weight is important. If you're overweight, losing weight may reduce your UI symptoms.

■ **Practice pelvic floor exercises.**

Stress urinary incontinence, a common cause of UI in women, is caused by weak pelvic muscles. Activities like bending over or sneezing put pressure on the bladder, which leaks. Exercises can strengthen the weakened muscles. Talk to your doctor.

■ **Avoid bladder irritants.**

Caffeine and alcohol both increase urine production, and caffeine can also cause bladder spasms. Acidic fruits and juices, spicy

foods, tomato-based products, carbonated drinks, artificial sweeteners, sugar and chocolate can all irritate your bladder.

- **Eat more fiber**, which can prevent constipation, a cause of urinary incontinence. Try adding more grains, legumes, vegetables and noncitrus fruits to your diet. Since a high-fiber diet might lower your risk of diabetes and heart disease and help you to maintain a healthy weight, it's a wise choice even if you don't have bladder problems.

UI can be related to a wide range of conditions, including diabetes, stroke, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, some surgeries or, for women, childbirth or menopause. Medications can cause incontinence or make it worse. These include diuretics, sedatives, narcotics, antidepressants, antihistamines, calcium channel blockers and alpha-blockers. In men, the most common cause of incontinence is surgery of the prostate.

If you're experiencing UI, talk to your health care provider. Common treatments include medications, fluid management, bladder training and pelvic floor exercises.

Build Your Bones

Peak bone mass—our maximum bone size and strength—is mostly determined by genes. Most of us reach peak bone mass around age 30 and start losing bone mass at about 40. As bones get thinner, they're more likely to break. It's a good idea to strengthen your bones at any age. Here's how:

- 1. Exercise.** Weight-bearing exercises, such as walking and dancing, and muscle-strengthening exercises, such as lifting weights, are both important for building and maintaining bone density.
- 2. Get enough calcium.** Everyone over age 19 should get at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily, according to the National Institutes of Health. Women older than 50 and anyone over 70 should get 1,200 milligrams daily.
- 3. Get some Vitamin D, too.** It helps the body absorb calcium. It's recommended that everyone get 600 milligrams daily.
- 4. Avoid activities**, such as smoking and drinking, that may lead to bone loss.



PARENTS, PUT A LID ON FRUIT JUICE

When it comes to unhealthy beverages for children, sweetened drinks such as soda, fruit punch and energy drinks top the list. But even 100 percent fruit juice, which is often touted as a healthier alternative, can be unhealthy in large amounts.



KNOW THE FACTS

Studies have shown that excessive fruit juice consumption can lead to obesity, metabolic syndrome and liver damage. Not only is juice high in sugar and calories, but the liquid calories also don't make us feel full the way that solid calories do. Plus, when your children drink fruit rather than eat it, they're missing out on one of the biggest nutritional benefits of fruit, which is fiber.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that fruit juice not be given to infants under 6 months of age because it offers no nutritional benefit to babies in this age group. For children 1 to 6 years old, AAP recommends

limiting juice to 4 to 6 ounces per day. For children 7 to 18, the limit should be 8 to 12 ounces.

The best beverage for children is water, but youngsters who have been drinking a lot of juice every day might have a hard time making the switch to plain water. Try these tips to help your kids make the change:

- Drop a slice of lemon, lime, cucumber or watermelon into a tall glass of water.
- Add a splash of 100 percent juice to water or sparkling water.
- Fill an ice cube tray with 100 percent juice and add a cube to plain water.

- About 1 in 5 school-age children in the U.S. is obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Up to 1 in 3 is overweight.
- Childhood obesity is typically caused by overeating or a lack of exercise, or both. Other causes include a family history of obesity or medical problems such as depression or anxiety.
- Being obese as a child can lead to health problems including heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

You Ask, We Answer: Colorectal Cancer

Q. What is colorectal cancer?

This type of cancer develops when too many cells divide inside the colon and rectum, which are parts of the digestive system. Some of these abnormal cells form bumps called polyps inside the colon. Not all polyps cause cancer. But over time, some may become cancerous. Left untreated, cancerous cells inside a polyp can spread into the colon or rectum.

Q. What are the symptoms of colorectal cancer?

There may not be symptoms right away. When symptoms do occur, the most common are: a change

in bowel habits, such as diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of stools, that lasts for more than a few days; a feeling that you need to have a bowel movement that is not relieved by having one; rectal bleeding with bright red blood; blood in the stool, which may make the stool look dark; cramping or abdominal pain; weakness and fatigue; and unintended weight loss.

Q. How is colorectal cancer detected?

Several tests can detect colorectal cancer. One that you can do at home, called a fecal occult blood test, looks for blood in the stool. You use a special kit at home to gather a small stool sample. You return the kit to your doctor or a lab, where a technician tests for the presence of blood. This test should be done every year. The most common screening test for colorectal cancer

is called a colonoscopy. Your doctor uses a long, flexible, lighted tube to look for polyps inside your large intestine. In some cases, polyps can be removed during the screening. This test is recommended every 10 years after you turn 50.

Q. Is a colonoscopy painful or uncomfortable?

You shouldn't feel discomfort during the procedure. You'll be given medicine that makes you relaxed and sleepy. If you have polyps removed, you may have some blood in your stool in the days after your test. You may also experience cramps, bloating or gas from the air pumped inside your colon.

Q. How long does a colonoscopy last?

The procedure usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes. It might take longer if your doctor finds polyps that need to be removed.



➔ RISK FACTORS

Some colon cancer risk factors are under your control, and some are not.

Risk factors you can change:

- Being overweight or obese
- Physical inactivity
- Diets high in red meat or processed meat
- Smoking
- Heavy alcohol use

Risk factors you can't change:

- Age (people over 50 are more likely to get colon cancer)
- Family history of colon cancer
- Genetic factors (having certain genes affects the growth of polyps)

The Eyes Have It

Whether for work or entertainment, devices like smartphones, tablets and computers are now essential parts of our daily lives. One unintended result of the increased hours spent staring at screens is the rising number of people who have eyestrain, sometimes called computer vision syndrome. Common symptoms include irritated, dry and tired eyes, blurry vision and headaches. The good news is that eyestrain usually doesn't cause serious long-term problems. Symptoms decline or go away completely when you address its causes.

What Causes Eyestrain

Factors such as glare and lack of contrast on a screen cause the eye muscles to work harder, the American Optometric Association says. In addition, we tend to blink less often when looking at screens, which causes the eyes to dry out and become irritated. Some people hold screens too close, and some may have uncorrected vision problems. Both are issues that can make eyestrain worse.

Eyestrain Relief

Follow these tips to reduce the effects of eyestrain:

- Take regular breaks. Whether using a screen or driving long distances, rest your eyes for



15 minutes every two hours. The AOA also recommends following the “20-20-20” rule: every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and view something 20 feet away.

- Use artificial tears to help keep eyes moist.
- Adjust your lighting. Be mindful of overhead lights and lights behind you, as glare from these causes the most strain. You should also adjust your device's contrast and letter size to a comfortable level.
- Keep the right viewing distance. It's best to keep screens an arm's length away.

- If you wear glasses, get an anti-reflective coating on the lenses. Some coatings are specially designed to reduce eyestrain for those working on devices.

- If you haven't had an eye exam in over a year, see your eye doctor to rule out underlying conditions that might be causing eyestrain.

REMEMBER: It's not only adults who develop eyestrain. If your kids are spending lots of time looking at screens, make sure they're following the same precautions that you are.

➔ BY THE NUMBERS

285
MILLION

The estimated number of people worldwide who are visually impaired. According to the World Health Organization, 80 percent of visual problems are preventable or curable.

12

The number of times per minute humans normally blink, according to the American Optometric Association (AOA). When we're using computers and other devices, we blink half to a third as often.

7

The number of hours a day the average American worker spends on a computer, either in the office or working from home, according to the AOA



The 411 on STIs

Sexually transmitted infections affect people of all ages, lifestyles and ethnicities. They are caused by bacteria, viruses and parasites and are spread through intimate contact like vaginal, anal or oral sex.

STIs don't always have symptoms. But they can have serious consequences: Left untreated, STIs can cause infertility, cancer and, in some cases, death. So it's important to get tested if you're sexually active. Here are a few common STIs:

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that's treated with antibiotics. It is more common in women. It doesn't always have symptoms, but it may cause painful urination and unusual discharge.

Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection treated with antibiotics. Symptoms include unusual discharge, painful urination and bleeding. Most women don't experience symptoms.

Herpes is caused by a virus and cannot be cured, though its symptoms can be managed with medication. Symptoms include painful blisters or sores.

HIV is the virus that leads to AIDS. Complications can lead to death. There is no cure for AIDS, but drugs can help people control symptoms and live longer.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a virus. For many people, there are no symptoms, but it may cause warts. Certain kinds of HPV lead to cancer. The HPV vaccine is recommended for all girls and boys between 11 and 12.

Syphilis rarely has symptoms. If it is not treated, it can hurt your brain or heart, and even kill you. Syphilis is treatable with antibiotics when it is caught early.

WHO SHOULD BE TESTED? Here are some screening guidelines. If you are pregnant or have HIV, talk to your doctor; your guidelines will vary.

➔ Ways to Protect Yourself

If you are sexually active, here are a few ways to protect yourself from STIs:

- Never have unprotected sex. Use condoms and dental dams. Make sure to use a new condom each time you have sex.
- Talk to your partner about safe sex. Avoid sex with a new partner until you can both be tested.
- Limit your partners. Staying in a long-term relationship with a healthy partner protects you against STIs.

Get Tested

New York City Health Department clinics offer free, confidential testing and treatment. Call 311 or visit NYC.gov/health to learn more.

STI	Women	Men
Chlamydia	Sexually active women ages 16-24; sexually active women over age 25 if at risk*	Sexually active men who have sex with men (MSM); every 3-6 months for MSM if at risk
Gonorrhea	Sexually active women; ages 25 and older if at risk	Sexually active MSM; every 3-6 months for MSM if at risk
Herpes	Women with multiple partners or presenting other STI symptoms	Men with multiple partners or presenting other STI symptoms
HIV	All women ages 13-64	All men ages 13-64; at least annually for sexually active MSM
Syphilis		Sexually active MSM; every 3-6 months for MSM if at risk

*At risk means men or women who have multiple sex partners, have a new partner, use condoms inconsistently, have sex while under the influence of drugs or alcohol or have sex in exchange for money or drugs.



Put a Little Spring in Your Diet

In springtime, farmers markets and grocery stores offer an abundance of fresh, local vegetables. When opting for greens, keep in mind that darker leaves (like spinach and kale) pack the most nutritional punch. Pale and crispy iceberg lettuce has the least nutritional value. Here are some of the best springtime vegetables to keep an eye out for, and some of the minerals and vitamins they offer:

- **Asparagus:** Vitamin K and folate
- **Radishes:** Vitamin C and potassium
- **Rhubarb:** Vitamin C, potassium and manganese
- **Scallions:** Vitamins A, C and K
- **Beet greens:** Phosphorous, zinc and vitamin A
- **Lettuce:** Romaine has some of the highest nutritional values among lettuces and is packed with vitamin A
- **Spinach:** Vitamins A, B2, B6, C, E and K, as well as manganese, magnesium, iron, calcium and potassium
- **Turnip greens:** Vitamins A, C and K and calcium



Roasted Asparagus Salad

Serves: 2

Prep time: 5 minutes

TIP

Be sure to dry the asparagus thoroughly before cooking, or it will not brown properly.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 medium asparagus spears, trimmed and patted very dry
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts
- 2 teaspoons light balsamic vinaigrette
- Pepper, to taste (coarsely ground preferred)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425° F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Lightly spray with cooking spray.
2. Arrange the asparagus in a single layer on the baking sheet. Sprinkle the walnuts around the asparagus. Lightly spray the asparagus with cooking spray. Roll back and forth to coat.
3. Roast for 5 minutes. Using tongs, turn the asparagus over gently. Roast for 4 minutes, or until the walnuts begin to brown. Transfer to a plate.
4. Spoon the vinaigrette over the asparagus and walnuts. Roll back and forth to coat. Sprinkle with the pepper. Let stand for 10 minutes so the flavors blend.

Serving size: 4 spears; calories, 45; carbohydrates, 3 g; protein, 2 g; fat, 3.5 g; sugars, 1 g; dietary fiber, 1 g; cholesterol, 0 mg; sodium, 85 mg



From *Diabetes & Heart Healthy Meals for Two* by American Diabetes Association and American Heart Association