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Health NEWS

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Health concerns, generation to generation

Each generation has its own music and slang. And while each person differs, age groups also share common health concerns. Here's what to know — and how to take action.



Generation Z: **Born after 1997**

Wellness worries: The pandemic's effects weigh on young people's mental health. Social media amplifies negative messages. In addition, rates of obesity and related diseases are high among children, teens, and young adults.

Healthful habits: Parents, watch kids' and teens' social media use for exposure to bullying and other harmful content. Seek help if you see signs of mental health or substance abuse problems.

Lay the foundation now for a healthy lifestyle. Eat a nutritious diet and stay active. Get checkups and ask about vaccines for COVID-19, human papillomavirus, and more.

Millennials: **Born 1981 to 1996**

Wellness worries: Financial stressors can contribute to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Many millennials are having children later in life. Fertility tends to decline with age, making it more challenging to conceive.

Healthful habits: Seek counseling about finances and for conditions like anxiety and depression. MetroPlusHealth offers many behavioral services and programs. To learn more, click [here](#).

See your doctor regularly when trying to start a family. If you can't get pregnant after six months to one year, they'll check for causes of infertility.

Generation X: **Born 1965 to 1980**

Wellness worries: Stressors in this group include caring for older parents. Meanwhile, money woes are still a factor. And substance use rates remain high.

Middle age is also when some people develop chronic diseases. These include cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

Healthful habits: Seek support if you're a caregiver. Taking care of yourself helps your loved one, too.

Starting or maintaining healthy habits now can prevent disease and extend life. One smart move: cancer screenings. Most people should begin screening for colorectal cancer at age 45 and breast cancer at age 40.

Baby Boomers: **Born 1946 to 1964**

Wellness worries: There are currently 46 million older Americans — and counting. Many will need extra care and support as they age.

More than nine in 10 have at least one chronic condition. Common problems include osteoporosis and cognitive conditions.

Healthful habits: Stay active to help relieve stress, boost brain health, and prevent falls.

Continue regular visits with your doctor. Together, you can develop a plan for your health for years to come.

4 hidden factors behind weight gain

You're eating well and sticking to your workout routine, but the number on the scale suddenly starts to climb. What gives? It can be frustrating, but weight gain isn't always about food or fitness. Instead, one of these hidden factors may be at play.

1. Your medications

Certain medications, like some antidepressants, blood pressure drugs, and hormonal birth controls, can trigger weight gain. Many affect your appetite, while others slow down your metabolism or cause fluid retention.

But even if you think your meds are behind the extra pounds, don't stop taking them. To learn more about weight gain and medications, click [here](#).

2. Underlying health issues

A lot of health conditions can make managing your weight feel like an uphill battle. Common culprits include:

- Sleep apnea
- Diabetes
- Thyroid problems
- Depression
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Always talk with your doctor if you're gaining weight and don't know why.

3. Lack of sleep

Not getting enough sleep does more than make you tired — it can disrupt your body's ability to regulate hormones that control hunger and metabolism. Plus, sleep deprivation increases cortisol, a stress hormone that promotes fat retention.

If you're struggling to get enough z's, talk with your doctor about your symptoms. They may recommend a test called a sleep study to find out if you have a condition such as **sleep apnea** or other sleep problems.



4. Your age

It's not your imagination: Your metabolism really does change as you get older. In addition, muscle mass naturally decreases with age — sometimes starting as early as your 30s — and smaller muscles use fewer calories. So if your eating habits haven't changed, you're now consuming more calories than you need. Altogether, this sets the stage for unwanted pounds.

That's one reason why it's so important to include muscle-building activities in your workout routine. No dumbbells? No problem. Things like digging in a garden, enjoying yoga, or doing body-weight exercises (think push-ups and sit-ups) all count.

Want to sign up for free fitness classes? Shape Up NYC offers step aerobics, yoga, Zumba, and more! To search for a class near you, click [here](#).

Overall, by understanding these hidden factors, you can better address the root cause of your weight gain and partner with your doctor to create a plan that works for you.

Recent measles outbreak is a reminder that **vaccination is crucial**

The cases of measles are rising, and the majority of cases are found among those who weren't vaccinated against measles.

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. Some may think that measles is only a short-term rash and fever, but it's actually a very serious disease. It can cause health complications, especially in children younger than five years old.

The virus lives in the nose and throat of a person who's infected. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. In fact, it can live in the air for two hours after an infected person leaves the area. And it's even more contagious than COVID-19 — if one person has it, up to 90% of the people around them will become infected if they're not protected.

Symptoms of measles include:

- High fever (up to 104 degrees or higher)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Rash

Treatment will depend on your child's symptoms, age, and general health. It will also depend on how severe the condition is.

In severe cases, measles can lead to pneumonia, swelling of the brain (encephalitis), permanent hearing loss, intellectual disability, and even death.

Call your child's healthcare provider right away if you suspect measles. Get emergency care if your child has:

- A fever higher than 105 degrees
- Trouble breathing
- Runny nose
- A severe headache
- Confusion or clumsiness

How to protect your children

Vaccines teach your child's body how to defend against germs. The **MMR vaccine** provides long-lasting protection against

three diseases — measles, mumps, and rubella. This childhood vaccine is given in two doses:

- First dose between ages 12 months and 15 months
- Second dose between ages four and six

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the MMR vaccine is very safe and effective. In fact, receiving two doses of MMR is about 97% effective at preventing measles.

The recent measles outbreak is a reminder to talk with your child's pediatrician about their vaccination schedule. It's also a good opportunity to discuss any immunization questions you may have. And don't forget to check with your doctor to make sure you're up-to-date on your vaccines, too.



How to **keep kids safe** from edibles



Did you know Americans now reach for cannabis more often than alcohol? But unlike a bottle of beer, cannabis-infused products can look just like regular snacks. And with the number of medicinal and recreational options on the rise, more kids may be tempted by “treats” that carry a hidden danger.

When treats turn toxic

From colorful wrappers to recognizable logos, edibles are often designed to mimic well-known brands. So it's easy for children to mistake Starburst gummies or medicated Nerds Ropes for the real thing. But inside, these products pack a potency that's far from kid-friendly.

Edibles contain THC, the psychoactive compound in cannabis. Plus, one treat usually has several servings — but a child wouldn't know that. Instead, they might eat the whole thing. It's an innocent mistake that can have serious consequences.

Symptoms of cannabis exposure in kids

If your child consumes a THC edible, they can experience a range of side effects. Here's what to watch for:

- Panic, anxiety, or paranoia
- Dizziness or weakness
- Slurred speech
- Poor coordination
- Unusual sleepiness
- Vomiting
- Respiratory issues, such as not breathing for 10 seconds or longer
- Seizures (in severe cases)

When in doubt, call for help

If you suspect your child accidentally ate an edible, don't wait for symptoms. Call the poison control center immediately for free guidance and support: **800.222.1222**. However, if they're struggling to breathe or having a seizure, call **911** right away.

Store it safely

To prevent issues altogether, treat cannabis products like medications: Store them out of reach or in a locked location. Even when they're put away, make sure edibles are in child-resistant packaging or containers. Also, educate family members, babysitters, and visitors on the importance of keeping these items secure.

More than just edibles

CBD — another cannabis compound — is a popular ingredient in lotions and oils. While these products don't cause a “high,” they can still pose risks if left within reach of kids. Potential side effects include drowsiness, decreased appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Tired of feeling tired?

5 ways to regain energy

If you've lost your umph lately, take a closer look at your daily habits. A few simple changes may be all you need to recharge.

Small but mighty

These simple swaps can help you power through your day:

1 Instead of more caffeine ... try water.

Reach for water before energy drinks, soda, or extra cups of coffee. Too much caffeine can interfere with a good night's sleep. Water's also a healthy way to avoid energy-sapping dehydration.



2 Instead of sugary snacks... try nutrient-rich options.

Replace candy and energy bars with fruit, nuts, and low-fat Greek yogurt. These choices offer a more sustained, satisfying boost — without the crash from added sugars.



3 Instead of slippers... try sneakers.

It's tempting to lounge around the house when you feel blah. But getting physical increases your energy in the long run. Work up to 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, like walking, spread throughout your week. To search for free Shape Up NYC fitness classes, click [here](#).



5 Instead of bad habits ... try healthy stress busters.

To cope or unwind, try doing yoga, reading, taking a bath, journaling, or spending time with friends. Don't rely on smoking, alcohol, drugs, and overeating. Doing so can lead to poorer health down the road.



4 Instead of staying up late... try setting a realistic bedtime.

Most adults need around seven hours of sleep. To help fall asleep faster, turn off your smartphone and other screens at least 30 minutes before lights out. Looking for more sleep tips? Click [here](#).



Don't miss out on your dental benefits!



Regular checkups and cleanings keep your teeth in great shape. They can also help prevent painful problems and high costs later.

MetroPlusHealth partners with DentaQuest to give you access to skilled dentists and quality care close to home.

Your benefits may include:

- Routine and preventative care
- Emergency care

- Diagnostic imaging
- Restorative work

Benefits vary by plan. For details, visit metroplus.org/members/health-information/dental-health.

Make the most of your benefits — schedule your appointment today!

Click [here](#) to find a dentist.

8-step guide to injury-free workouts

Exercise can be a game-changer for your health. Whether you're just getting started or you've been crushing your routine for a while, you're already on the right track to better living.

Staying injury-free is key to staying on that track. No one likes being sidelined by pain, but it can be easy to fall into the trap of pushing too hard, too fast. Luckily, avoiding injuries doesn't have to be complicated.

No matter where you're at in your fitness journey, here are eight simple ways to exercise safely:

- 1. Mix it up.** A balanced regimen can reduce your chances of overstraining your body. Make sure your routine includes both cardio and strength training. Don't forget flexibility exercises, too.
- 2. Wear the right gear.** Choose comfortable clothes that are lightweight enough to keep you cool. Replace worn-out footwear every 300 to 500 miles or six to eight months (whichever comes first).
- 3. Start with a warm-up.** Jumping straight into things can be risky. Instead, ease in with a warm-up that gets your blood flowing and loosens your muscles. One idea is to start with a light version of your workout.
- 4. Take it slow and steady.** Progress takes time, so ramp up your intensity gradually. Add more reps, increase weights, or fit in an extra session — but do it over weeks, not days. Starting out with weights that are too heavy can cause injuries. Many women start with 5-pound dumbbells and men with 10 to 15 pounds. But you may need to start out using as little as 1 or 2 pounds.
- 5. Focus on form.** When lifting weights, using the proper form is essential for avoiding injuries. One universal rule: Never lock your joints; leave a slight bend in your knees and elbows.
- 6. Stay hydrated.** Dehydration can lead to fatigue and dizziness, which make you more prone to accidents. Drink two cups of water before you start, sip throughout your workout, and then down two more cups when you're done. Hydrated muscles = happy muscles.
- 7. Cool down.** After your workout, give your body time to wind down. A good stretch — held for 10 to 20 seconds — will help your muscles relax and improve range of motion.
- 8. Listen to your body.** Signs like pain, fatigue, or lingering soreness are signs you should take a break. But even if you feel fine, you should still take days off to let your body recover.



Ready to see how your strength training smarts stack up? Try this short **quiz**.

HOW (AND WHY) TO AVOID

MICROPLASTICS

These tiny plastic particles are making big headlines.
What are they famous for? Being everywhere.
Microplastics have been found in:



Fruits and
vegetables

Plastic water
bottles

Clothing

Household
dust

Plastics contain certain chemicals. And these chemicals are linked to health problems such as cancer, ADHD, fertility issues, and more. But experts say there's still a lot to learn about the specific dangers of microplastics.

Some studies report that microplastics may:

- Weaken the immune system
- Increase inflammation
- Affect liver, kidney, and lung tissue

Researchers are also finding them in almost every part of the human body. Naturally, this raises questions about how microplastics might affect our health.



Reduce plastic in your life

No one can completely avoid plastics. But by making small changes, you can cut down on your exposure. Here's how:



Use reusable or cloth bags at the grocery store.

Buy fresh produce and avoid items wrapped in plastic.



Drink tap water. Consider getting a filter.

When you use a water bottle, opt for stainless steel instead of plastic.



Wash full loads of laundry with cold water.

Prioritize cotton and wool fabrics over nylon, polyester, and spandex.



Take your shoes off to avoid bringing in dust from the outside.

Vacuum regularly. Use a HEPA filter to trap the dust.

