

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12*



### Pastor's Corner

#### Reflections on the Delayed 2020 General Conference: Part I—"A Seismic Shift in Tone and Spirit"

When the final prayer was rendered and adjournment pronounced at approximately 6:30 pm on Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, in Charlotte, NC, at the close of the "Delayed 2020 General Conference", spontaneous applause, singing, and shouts of joy echoed throughout the Charlotte Convention Center as the crowd of over a thousand delegates, observers, and global United Methodist staff and workers began to make their way to the exits. As I left the side ground floor of the arena where I had been seated as an observer, and began to make my way up an escalator and through the main corridors of the Convention Center, the festive singing never stopped. Smaller groupings of approximately 20-40 Conference attendees huddled up at different corridor junctions along the way for picture taking, hugs, and group celebrations. This was in marked contrast to my experience at the last General Conference held in 2019.

As someone who was present at the last "Special Call Session of General Conference" held in St. Louis in 2019, the spirit and tone of this year's "Delayed 2020 General Conference" could not have been more different. The Special Call Session of 2019, although devoted almost exclusively to resolving our denominational differences over issues of human sexuality, left the denomination even more polarized and fractured than before.

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Proposals were presented that were thought by many to be inherently reasonable with a “live and let live” intent. Such an approach, it was reasoned, could have maintained denominational unity by permitting Conferences, churches, and clergy holding divergent views to assert a basic level of freedom and autonomy on these issues. All such efforts in 2019, however, were narrowly defeated and were replaced instead with an even more restrictive and punitive set of church law and polity. In the place of widespread acclamation and joy, I instead witnessed the pain and sorrow felt by many who believed the denomination had, once again, missed the mark in denying the basic humanity of our LGBTQ members and constituents.

The even more restrictive and punitive practices adopted at the 2019 Special Call Session of General Conference, such as making it a chargeable offense for clergy to perform same-sex weddings and withholding denominational funds from ministries pertaining to LGBTQ constituents, were to be enforced at all levels of the Church until a new General Conference could take up these matters once again. It was widely anticipated that the regularly scheduled 2020 General Conference would be the venue where these issues would ultimately come to a head, and where the denomination might, very well, have to confront the prospect of having to fracture along, what appears to be, clear theological divides on matters of human sexuality.

Covid, however, and the ensuing pandemic and pandemic related issues, mitigated against having General Conference in 2020 or in the immediate years that followed. In the delay of the 2020 General Conference, and with each passing year since the Special Call Session of General Conference in 2019, neither side of the theological spectrum on issues of human sexuality has been satisfied with the present state-of-affairs. Some, who have lamented the lack of universal enforcement of the restrictive and punitive measures put into place at the 2019 Special Call Session, have taken advantage of a new church law also approved during this session, to disaffiliate their congregations and church property from the denomination.

Disaffiliation (Paragraph 2553 in the UM Book of Discipline) has a number of requirements including a two-thirds vote by the disaffiliating congregation; majority approval by the local church's Annual Conference; and the fulfillment of additional financial obligations by the local church. This pathway for local church disaffiliation, by church law, expired at the end of 2023. It is estimated, however, that approximately 25 percent of churches in the US formally removed themselves from the broader United Methodist connection in this way, with the vast majority of these disaffiliations occurring in the southern US, echoing the red and blue political landscape in this country.

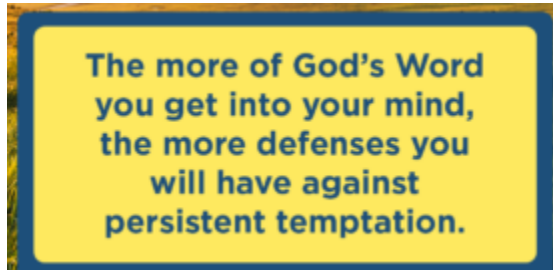
While some may have indicated through disaffiliation their displeasure with the transitional state we found ourselves in as a denomination in-between these two General Conferences, others have opted to stay, but have also acknowledged that the 2019 General Conference status quo, which reinforced pre-existing restrictive church language and polity on matters of human sexuality while adding even more punitive measures of enforcement, was neither a tenable nor grace filled position for the Church to continue in the long-run. Consequently, the next opportunity for discussion and ultimate resolution of these issues as a global Church, would be this year's (2024) highly anticipated “Delayed 2020 General Conference”.

Stay tuned for Part II: “Historic Firsts for the Global UMC”.

## Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

### Are You Hiding God's Word on Your Shelf or in Your Heart?

Source: Daily Hope



*"I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin."*—Psalm 119:11 (MSG)

The more of God's Word you get into your mind, the more defenses you will have against persistent temptation.

In fact, the Bible is part of your emergency kit for temptation. The Bible calls this "hiding God's Word in your heart." The Message paraphrase of

this verse says, *"I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin"* (Psalm 119:11).

You hide God's Word in your heart, or memorize it. Then, when Satan tempts you, you say, "That's not right, because I know that God says *this*." When Satan came to Jesus in the wilderness, he gave Jesus three big temptations. Every time Satan tempted him, Jesus quoted a Bible verse back to him. If this is the approach Jesus used to resist Satan, then it's the same one you should use too.

When Satan tempts you, you don't want to pull out the Bible app on your phone and say, "Now, I know *somewhere* in here, there's a verse that says not to do that." That's not helpful. But when you have God's Word memorized, then the Holy Spirit can remind you of its truth.

You have to start memorizing God's Word if you want to have an effective tool for victory over the persistent temptations in your life. If you know the areas in which you are most vulnerable to temptation, then you can find the verses in the Bible that talk about those things. Then you write those verses down on an index card and read them over and over until you have them memorized.

There is no shortcut to learning the discipline of memorizing Scripture. You just have to start and then be persistent, trusting God to help you learn and remember everything you need for spiritual growth.

The Bible is worthless to you when it's sitting on the shelf in your home. But with God's Word in your mind, it becomes a powerful weapon to fight every temptation Satan can throw at you. Start today by finding some Bible verses that will help you in the areas where you're weak. Then bank them in the vault of your heart.

#### Talk It Over

- What are some other strategies you can use for memorizing God's Word, besides writing them on an index card?
- Who can help hold you accountable as you learn the discipline of memorizing Scripture?
- Why is it important to be able to recall God's promises to you from his Word?



## KIDZ Corner

### Children's Ministry Visits Capitol Hill

This spring, the Children's Ministry hosted their first day on Capitol Hill. During the visit, the children visited the Children's Ministry coordinator, Ms. Taylor Ware, in the Office of Senator John Hickenlooper. The children learned about the many functions of government and what Congress is doing.

Following their visit to Ms. Taylor's office, the children went on a guided tour of the U.S. The Children were able to visit many historical sites, including the Old Senate and House Chambers along with the old Supreme Court chamber. The children were excited to learn about the successes and challenges in America's history—including the triumphs of our Black American leaders, through their statues. The Capitol Building features statues of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Mary McLeod Bethune.



After a busy day following in the footsteps of our lawmakers, the youth enjoyed a fun evening at Dave and Busters Arcade enjoying a time of fellowship. The Children's ministry team, sisters Taylor and Terri Ware, look forward to hosting more events in Washington D.C. this summer after many requests from the youth for a follow up adventure.

Stay Tuned!



## Meet Our 2024 Graduates

### Anaiyah Boone



Sister Barbara Boone is proud to announce the graduation of her great granddaughter, Anaiyah Boone. Anaiyah graduated on May 11, 2024, from Howard University summa cum laude with a Bachelor's degree in Education. She intends to further her education at Bowie State University on a scholarship awarded to her. While Anaiyah is a member of Embury AME church in College Park, she is well known here at Ebenezer. She served as an acolyte, attended Camp Odyssey during the summer months, and attends services here whenever possible.

Please continue to pray for Aniyah and all of our young people making a difference. It indeed "takes a village."

*Submitted by Sis. Barbara Boone & Family*



### Thomas Scott Brown, III

Thomas Scott Brown, III, graduated from Hampton University magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Flight. Thomas is the son of Thomas and Shanti Brown and grandson of Bro. Thomas and Sis. Joan Brown.

*Submitted by Bro. Thomas & Sis. Joan Brown*



### William Alexander Porter



On May 22, William Alexander Porter received a "Bachelor of Music Degree," with a major in "Jazz Commercial Saxophone Performance" from Towson University. "Alex," as he is loving known, is the son of Linda & William Porter, Sr.

*Submitted by Sis. Linda Porter*



### Imani West

On May 12, 2024, Imani West graduated Summa Cum Laude from Hampton University. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. Imani is the daughter of Dr. Jennifer West.

*Submitted by Dr. Jennifer West*



### Sophia Ololade Oluokun



This is my middle granddaughter, Ms. Sophia Ololade Oluokun graduated from the Tacoma School of the Arts High School. She will be attending the Pacific Northwest College of Portland in Oregon. Sophia is the granddaughter of Sis. Stella Oluokun.

*Submitted by Sis. Stella Oluokun*



### Shavaughn Scott

Shavaughn Scott graduated from the Aerospace and Aviation Technology Program at DuVal High School on May 22, 2024. He is extremely thankful to his family, friends, and church for all the support and prayers throughout his primary education. With that chapter of his life behind him, we are pleased to announce that he will be attending Tuskegee University where he will study Mechanical Engineering with a concentration in Aerospace Engineering come Fall 2024. Please keep him lifted in prayer as he begins this new journey. Thank you and God bless!



*Submitted by Sis. Shauna Douglas*



**Keliz Barnaby**



I am proud to announce the graduation of Keliz Barnaby on May 29, 2024, from the Charles Herbert Flowers High School. Keliz is the daughter of Brian Barnaby and granddaughter of Ellalene Barnaby.

As a single dad, it certainly had its challenges, but I could not have done this without the support and prayers of family. Much gratitude to my mother for her continued guidance and support. Keliz, may God bless you abundantly.

*Submitted by Brian Barnaby*



**Stephen Gbelee**

On June 4, 2024 Stephen Gbelee graduated from Hyattsville Middle School. He will be attending Charles Herbert Flowers High School in the fall. Congratulations Stephen.

You have been faithful to God and your church family. We are so very proud of you. We look forward to seeing what God has in store for your future. Stephen is the son of Chinegirl Gbelee and James Flomo.



*Submitted by Sis. Chinegirl Gbelee*



**Donte Barnette**



On June 13, 2024, Donte M. Barnette graduated from Sheppard Pratt High School at Hunt Valley. He is the son of Brenda Barnette, nephew of Linda Porter, and the grandson of the late Mary Barnette. Congratulations Donte.

*Submitted by Sis. Brenda Barnette*





## Naomi Camille Starks

Naomi recites a poem from her Kindergarten Promotional Exercises

### *On My Way*

*I'm on my way. This year's going a little faster.  
I'm on my way. I'm feeling a little bit smarter.  
I'm on my way. Just look at all the friends I have made.  
And these memories will never fade.  
I'm on my way. I'm proud of me.  
I'm on my way. Watch me be the best that I can be.  
I'm On My Way!*

Precious words: "I'm on my way to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, let's celebrate!"



Proud Parents: Kimberly R. Jones and Jason A. Starks  
Proud Grandparents: Barrington and Kathleen Jones

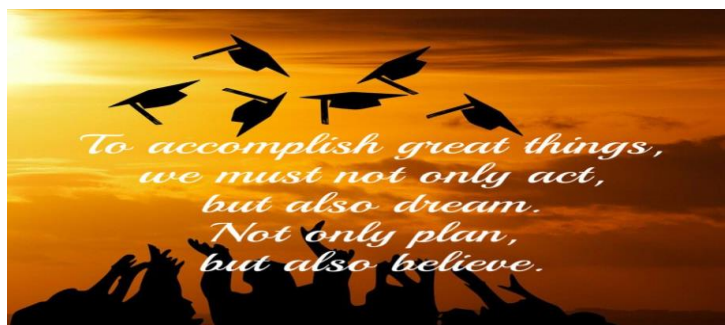


## Breanna Pickeral



Breanna Pickeral is graduating from Kingsman Academy Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. She is the daughter of Raynika Gibson, the granddaughter of Kimberly Briscoe, and the great granddaughter of Gabriel Patrick.

Submitted by Sis. Gabriel Patrick



*Congratulations to all of our graduates!*



## Keeping You Informed

**'Why Can't I Sleep?!'****NIH is taking a closer look at why we don't get enough rest**

*Source: NIH MedlinePlus Magazine, January 2, 2024*

About 1 in 3 adults in the United States say they don't get enough sleep. A good night's rest does more than energize you—sleep can affect your mood, keep your heart healthy, and help you feel better when you're sick. But not everyone gets enough sleep every night to feel rested. In fact, about 1 in 3 adults in the United States say they don't get enough sleep. At the same time, racial and ethnic minorities and people with lower incomes are most likely to be sleep deprived.

These groups are also more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods or unsafe housing. They are less likely to have access to health care, healthy food, green space, or places to exercise. They are also more likely to live near environmental hazards and experience discrimination. These factors are called social determinants of health (SDOH).

SDOH can cause a lot of stress, and stress makes it harder to get enough sleep. That's why researchers are looking at SDOH more closely to help people get better sleep.

Marishka K. Brown, Ph.D., Director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research (NCSDR), said that people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds of the same socioeconomic status tend to have similar health. But when their living environments change, their health often changes, too. In other words, it's about place...not race.

"For the longest time, a lot of research focus was on the biology...on the individual," said Dr. Brown. "We know that's important; we know those factors contribute to health. We know genetics matter ... but it's not the biggest piece."

**Noisy neighbors and poor air quality can keep you awake**

One way to get enough sleep is to keep bedrooms as dark and quiet as possible. But in urban areas, it may be hard to keep bedrooms completely dark. This can be due to things like streetlights outside or motion-sensor lights for safety reasons. Surrounding noise from the street or neighbors close by can also make it hard to fall and stay asleep.

Another is to keep bedrooms cool, but this can be a problem, too. Big cities can turn into "heat islands" and become hotter than surrounding towns. That's due to less tree cover and more pavement or buildings that absorb heat.

"One of the things your body does naturally for sleep is cool itself down," Dr. Brown said. "But if you are in a space that is 10 or 15 degrees hotter than the surrounding population in the suburbs...those populations are disadvantaged."

Air quality is also a concern for sleep health because it can cause breathing problems. In urban areas, air pollution can worsen respiratory problems such as asthma, especially in children.

Black children are also four to six times more likely to have sleep-disordered breathing problems than White children. But this is not due to genetics—it's tied to living in households with lower incomes and in more environmentally hazardous communities.

**Irregular schedules hinder wellness**

Sticking to a bedtime routine or sleep schedule is a great way to get enough shut eye every night, but this may not be possible for people who work irregular hours. Shift workers, emergency personnel, health care professionals, or truck drivers are some people who do not always work a regular 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule.

Getting enough quality sleep can also be hard for people who work nights. Your body's circadian rhythm (a series of physical, mental, and behavioral changes in your body that follow a 24-hour cycle) is very sensitive to light. Staying awake at night and sleeping during the day can disturb your circadian rhythm. This can cause other biological processes, such as your immune system, to not perform well.

Over time, irregular sleep can lead to diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, and obesity. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) studied irregular sleep patterns in a group of about 2,000 people ages 45 to 84 and followed them five years. People with irregular sleep patterns were more than twice as likely to develop cardiovascular disease compared to those with regular sleep patterns. This was even more common among racial and ethnic minorities.

**Getting help for sleep problems is not always easy**

Access to health care is important for sleep health and wellness in general. Treating underlying conditions may be necessary to get better sleep. For example, if you are not sleeping well, your health care provider may suggest doing a sleep study with a specialist to see if you have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea or narcolepsy.

But for people without health insurance or living in rural areas, seeing a specialist may not be an option.

"Someone in the middle of Iowa who doesn't have a large academic center anywhere near them is going to have serious challenges with seeing a specialized provider," Dr. Brown said. "Remote options such as telehealth could begin to break down some of those barriers, but currently they still exist."

Interest in sleep health research—and in finding solutions to eliminate health disparities—is growing. NCSDR, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, and other institutes across NIH are coming together to find connections between sleep and community health.

"It is so enlightening to see the focus on sleep disparities, particularly in the context of social determinants of health," Dr. Brown said.

**Ask an Expert: Marishka K. Brown, Ph.D., Director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research**

Dr. Marishka K. Brown is the Director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research. Sleep is second nature. But for biomedical research, sleep is a relatively new field of study. Marishka K. Brown, Ph.D., said sleep health research has exploded in the past decade or so. As the Director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research (NCSDR) at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, Dr. Brown talked to NIH MedlinePlus Magazine about the many facets of sleep and why it can be so hard to get.

**What role does sleep play in our overall health?**

Most people think about sleep as a behavior, like physical activity and diet. It's also a part of basic biology, like breathing. Many consider sleep the "third pillar" of health. Sleep isn't just important—it's *required* for overall health and well-being. Just like air and water, you need sleep. Research in animal models showed that sleep deprivation over several days impacted their survival.

We know sleep does a lot of different things for our physical and mental health and well-being. About a decade ago there was an amazing research finding that the brain had this process to "wash" or cleanse itself during sleep. And last summer, the American Heart Association added sleep to its Life's Essential 8™ (previous Life's Essential 7™) checklist of measures to improve cardiovascular health.

**Types of sleep*****Non-REM sleep***

- Stage 1: Light sleep; easily awakened; muscles relax with occasional twitches; eye movements are slow.
- Stage 2: Eye movements stop; slower brain waves, with occasional bursts of rapid brain waves.
- Stage 3: Occurs soon after you fall asleep and mostly in the first half of the night. Deep sleep; difficult to awaken; large slow brain waves, heart and respiratory rates are slow and muscles are relaxed.

***REM Sleep***

- Usually first occurs about 90 minutes after you fall asleep, and longer, deeper periods occur during the second half of the night; cycles along with the non-REM stages throughout the night.
- Eyes move rapidly behind closed eyelids.
- Breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure are irregular.
- Dreaming occurs.
- Arm and leg muscles are temporarily paralyzed.

### How does sleep change during a person's life?

Sleep goes from being necessary for brain *development* to being a part of brain *maintenance* and *repair*. Starting with early childhood, sleep is required for growth of the brain and the overall nervous system. People may not know that certain functions of the brain aren't fully developed until your early 20s. When you are sleep deprived, it impacts that development.

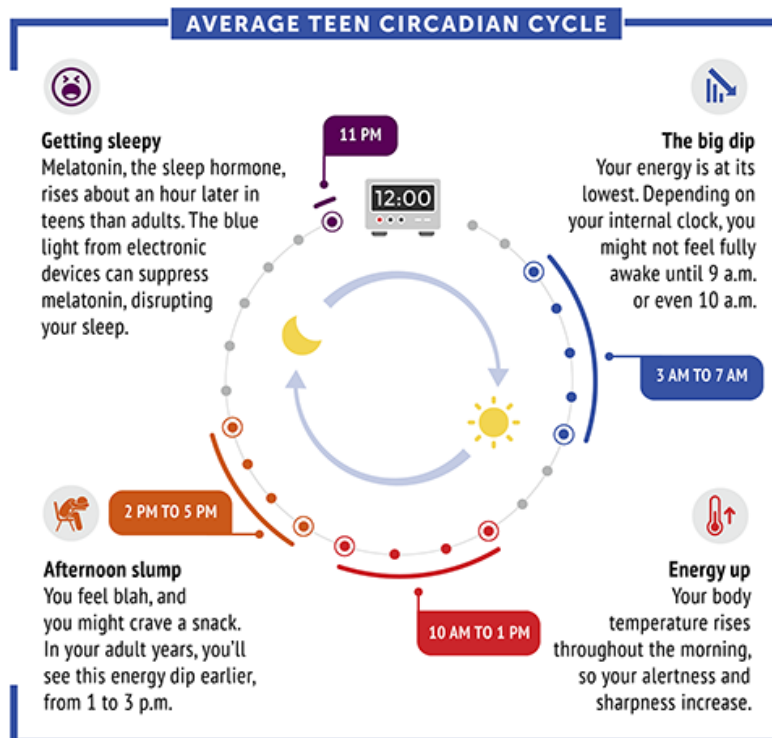
When you think about adolescents, sometimes they are up late at night or parents have to drag them out of bed for school. But that's actually their biology. Teenagers have "delayed phase." Based on their circadian rhythms, they are more alert later in the night. By the time they are fully formed, mature adults, they get up earlier.

Older adults may get enough hours of sleep, but that sleep is more fragmented. But their sleep may not be continuous; they may get up a lot more at night. They also have "advanced phase," where they go to bed earlier and they get up earlier in the morning. And sometimes that is natural, but it can be made worse by medication, body changes (such as with the bladder and aging), or a sleep disorder.

### What are circadian rhythms?

You have an internal, 24-hour clock that signals physical, mental, and behavior changes in your body—including when you get sleepy. This repeating 24-hour cycle is called the circadian rhythm, and circadian biology is the study of these rhythms.

Circadian rhythms are most sensitive to light. Many people recommend getting bright light early in the morning for better sleep because light cues your circadian biology. If you're not getting the appropriate amount of light at the appropriate time of day, then it essentially misaligns your circadian cues.



Circadian research around health and disease is a growing focus across NIH. For example, scientists are studying how circadian rhythms are affected by what time of day you eat or take medication.

**What tips would you give for people trying to get better sleep?**

NCSDR's sleep tips for better sleep hygiene are based on research, and their goal is to help people achieve good overall sleep. However, research has shown that while sleep tips are necessary, they may not be sufficient for everyone. Getting bright light early in the morning is one, but so is having consistent sleep schedules. But there are people working atypical shifts or living in environments that make it extremely difficult to follow proper sleep hygiene. So it's recommended to follow as many tips as you can.

You should have a caffeine cutoff time, if possible. But we know that for several reasons, either social or economic, there are populations for whom this will not really work. Also, have alcohol cutoff times or be mindful of alcohol consumption. Alcohol will put you to sleep, but it also fragments your sleep, and you may feel worse when you wake up.

Exercise is good for whole-body health, but when thinking about your circadian rhythms and when certain hormones are active, there's an optimal time of day to do everything. You should be mindful of exercise cutoff times—at least 90 minutes or two hours before your bedtime. If you're exercising before your bedtime, you're increasing hormones that signal that it's time to be active.

**Is all sleep created equal? Are certain kinds of sleep better than others?**

The reason it's recommended to get a certain number of hours per night is because sleep goes through multiple cycles. It takes that many hours to go through all the cycles. If you are shortening that time, you're skipping all these other processes.

When you're talking about all sleep and whether it's created equal, sleep has some variability. It comes back to some of the things we said earlier about the lifespan. Sleep in a 6-month-old is going to be very different from sleep in a 10-year-old. You have more rapid eye movement (REM) sleep in childhood and infancy, and as you go through life, you have less of it. One of the concerns for older adults is because they have more fragmented sleep, they spend less time in "slow wave" sleep. This is critical for learning and memory. If you're not reaching those stages, then that can negatively affect your quality of life.

**Are there ways that sleep affects our health that we may not realize?**

Research from across NIH has found relationships between sleep, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease. There's also evidence that circadian rhythms can affect cancerous tumors. And NIH is interested in the links between sleep (or sleep loss) and depression, suicide, and the risk of substance misuse.

It's our mission to share that research and its impact on overall health with everyone.



## Hidden Risk Factors, Warning Signs of Liver Disease

Drinking, taking antibiotics, even high blood pressure  
can tax your liver in potentially dangerous ways

*Source: AARP; by Beth Howard*

Many think of alcohol as the main cause of liver complications. But contrary to popular belief, various factors impact liver health, including weight, certain medications, genetics and even viral infections. No matter the trigger, a major concern surrounding liver disease is its silent progression. Your liver could be losing its ability to filter out harmful substances from your blood long before symptoms appear.

Most of the time you don't know your liver has been harmed until you develop the advanced symptoms of cirrhosis. "That's the tough part of treatment," says Anurag Maheshwari, M.D., a gastroenterologist with the Institute for Digestive Health and Liver Disease at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore. "Convincing patients that they need to act now in order to avoid complications in the future can sometimes be a challenge, because they don't feel any different today."

### Early symptoms and warning signs of liver damage

In the early stages of chronic liver disease there are often no symptoms. Occasionally people with early-stage liver disease experience fatigue, right-side abdominal pain, increased bruising or itching—symptoms that are usually missed because they could be caused by other ailments.

### Where is the liver?

The liver is located in the upper-right portion of the abdomen, below the diaphragm and on top of the stomach, right kidney and intestines. In adults, it weighs about three pounds and is shaped like a cone.



"If you have discomfort on your side, for instance, it could be a million other things," says Jamile Wakim-Fleming, M.D., director of the Fatty Liver Disease Medical Home Program at Cleveland Clinic.

Routine checkups, lab tests or imaging studies are typically how patients first find out if they're developing a liver problem or disease.

### Signs of advanced liver disease

As liver disease advances, the signs become clearer and warrant immediate medical attention. These symptoms include:

- Jaundice or yellowing of the eyes or skin.
- Pain and distention of the abdomen due to the release of fluid from the liver.
- Swelling of the lower legs due to fluid retention.
- Confusion or forgetfulness. When the liver isn't functioning properly, toxins build up in the blood and can travel to the brain, affecting brain function.
- Dark-colored urine.
- Pale-colored stool.

- Chronic fatigue.
- Nausea or vomiting.

**Liver disease and age**

Older adults who are in good health are not inherently more prone to liver disease. But older age can amplify the severity of symptoms associated with liver problems, making recovery more challenging. What's more, treatments may not work as well in older people as they do in younger people.

**Causes of liver disease**

It's always better to prevent liver failure than to treat it. Here are some common—and not so common—risks and how you can avoid or stop the damage.

**Risk No. 1: Alcohol intake**

We all know that alcohol can be hard on your liver. But how much is too much?

Maheshwari notes that a safe alcohol limit may seem surprisingly low: no more than one alcoholic beverage a day (or seven drinks in a one-week period) for women and two or fewer drinks for men (or 14 drinks over a week's time).

“When patients drink alcohol in excess, beyond the capacity of the liver to metabolize it, the excess alcohol is turned into fat and stored,” Maheshwari says. “Called steatosis, this fat interferes with the liver's function and causes cell death.”

The good news? Putting the brakes on alcohol consumption can stop the progression of fibrosis, and liver function may improve. “But it depends on when it was caught,” says Wakim-Fleming. “A lot of people who have alcoholic liver disease end up needing liver transplants because they don't stop drinking until [too] late.”

If you suspect you may have a problem, talk to your doctor, who may refer you to a specialist for evaluation and tests.

**Risk No. 2: Weight**

With obesity rates on the rise in the U.S., there's been — along with an alarming increase in diabetes and other metabolic ills — a growing epidemic of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), which occurs when too much fat is stored in the liver.

“Obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol — common features of metabolic syndrome — are all known major risk factors for the development of fatty liver disease,” says Craig Lammert, M.D., assistant professor of medicine at the Indiana University School of Medicine and a practicing gastroenterologist and hepatologist at IU Health. As with alcohol-related liver damage, these conditions cause fat to be deposited in the liver.

“The scary piece of this is, anywhere from 15 to 50 percent of the nation's population may have too much fat in the liver,” says Lammert. Of those, he says, about 5 percent are at risk of inflammation that can damage the liver. “But we don't always know who that's going to be.”



Inflammation hurts the liver by way of a condition known as nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), which damages and kills liver cells. “We’re hearing a lot about this because over the next few years, fatty liver disease will probably be near the top, if not the top, cause for liver transplantation in this country,” Lammert notes.

If you’re carrying around excess pounds or battling diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure, the risk of liver failure just adds another good reason to shed some weight and get your blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure under control. Although there is no cure for NAFLD, it can be reversed.

### **Risk No. 3: Drugs and supplements**

Certain drugs and supplements can also injure your liver, depending on the dose and other factors. Taking too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the most common over-the-counter risk. “People who overdose with Tylenol overwhelm the metabolizing system and drive liver toxicity,” Lammert says.

But patients should have few problems if they take the pain reliever as prescribed, which includes consuming no more than 4,000 milligrams in a day. Those with existing liver disease may be advised to take less than 2,000 milligrams. One caveat: If you’re taking acetaminophen at those levels, be sure to avoid alcohol, which would add to the cumulative burden on the liver, Lammert advises. Other painkillers, including NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve), can be similarly harmful under the same circumstances.

If you are taking anything approaching the maximum dose of acetaminophen, be aware that the drug is often found in other products, such as multi-symptom cold and flu formulations, making it easy to unwittingly double the amount you are taking. So be sure to check product labels for acetaminophen.

Surprisingly, “antibiotics are probably the most important cause of liver injury we see,” Lammert says. This is particularly true of Augmentin (a combination of amoxicillin and clavulanate), which is used to treat common bacterial problems like sinus and urinary tract infections. Liver complications affect an estimated 30,000 people a year taking this compound in the U.S. And although most of the harm is temporary, some is so damaging as to require a liver transplant.

There are also reports of liver damage with certain supplements, including bodybuilding and weight-loss supplements that contain green tea extract, linoleic acid and androgenic anabolic steroids. Even two essential nutrients, vitamin A and niacin, can harm the liver if taken above the recommended doses.

### **Risk No. 4: Viral infections**

Hepatitis B and C are viral infections of the liver that can lead to liver damage and even cancer. (The vast majority of people with hepatitis A recover with no lasting harm.) As with other liver diseases, people with hepatitis often don’t have symptoms and may not know they are infected, Wakim-Fleming says.

People contract hepatitis B (HBV) through blood, semen and other body fluids and by sharing personal items (needles, razors) with someone who has the infection. Hepatitis C (HCV) is contracted through contact with the blood of someone with HCV, often through

the sharing of drug paraphernalia or through a transfusion of contaminated blood or organ transplant prior to 1992, when blood started to be screened for the virus. More than half of people with HCV develop a chronic infection, and up to 25 percent develop cirrhosis over 10 to 20 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vaccines are available for HBV, and everyone ages 18 to 79 should get an HCV test at least once, particularly those born between 1945 and 1965. “The guidelines over the past 10 years or so are that all baby boomers should be screened for hepatitis C,” Lammert says. Despite this recommendation, too few people who are eligible seek testing. “The good news is we now have good treatments to eradicate the disease.”

### **Risk No. 5: Genetics and autoimmune conditions**

Genetic conditions like hemochromatosis and Wilson’s disease can contribute to the development of liver disease. In these conditions, excess metals can build up in the liver, causing cirrhosis and organ toxicity.

Additionally, autoimmune conditions may lead to liver disease and, to some extent, genetics may play a role as well. The exact cause of autoimmune liver disease is not fully understood by doctors; however, it is theorized that factors such as infection, medication or chemical exposure could act as triggers. While there may be a genetic predisposition, the specific role of genetics in causing autoimmune diseases remains unclear. Treatment for autoimmune liver disease typically involves long-term management, and while the majority of patients respond well to treatment, they often require lifelong medication.

### **When to see a doctor**

Given liver disease’s silent nature, patients should see a doctor as soon as they become concerned about their liver function, said Maheshwari. Make sure that routine liver tests are incorporated into physical exams so any abnormalities can be detected early.

Note that AST and ALP blood tests, which assess liver function, don’t necessarily correlate with liver injury. If levels are slightly elevated longer than six months, a full evaluation may be necessary to determine the underlying cause. A specialist may administer a noninvasive test, such as an elastography, to better understand liver function.

Treatment options for liver disease vary depending on the cause, with a liver transplant being the last resort. For some, eliminating alcohol or inflammatory medications may be necessary. In the case of viral hepatitis, medications may be required to combat the virus.

Meanwhile, for individuals dealing with an autoimmune liver disease, a medication to suppress the immune system from attacking itself may be needed. Unfortunately, genetic conditions often have limited treatment options, and a liver transplant becomes the ultimate recourse for those with end-stage liver damage.

### **The Four Stages of Chronic Liver Disease**

Hepatitis: Inflammation in your liver that can lead to scarring, known as fibrosis.

1. Fibrosis: The liver gradually stiffens and scar tissue replaces healthy tissue, restricting blood flow. Some amount of fibrosis can be reversible if detected early because liver cells can regenerate.

2. Cirrhosis: Scarring of the liver becomes irreversible because there are no longer cells healthy enough to regenerate lost tissue. The damage can be slowed or stopped at this stage by consulting a liver specialist.
3. Liver failure: The liver can no longer function adequately for the body's needs and has lost the ability to regenerate and its function is slowly declining.

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*Editor's Note: This story, originally published Nov. 9, 2021, was updated to reflect new information. Beth Howard is a North Carolina-based health and lifestyle writer. She has written for dozens of publications, including U.S. News & World Report, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Prevention, Better Homes & Gardens and Reader's Digest.*



### Understanding Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

Source: WebMD

**What Is Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)?** Rheumatoid arthritis is an immune system condition, or “autoimmune disorder,” that causes inflammation of the lining of the joints. It may also affect the skin, eyes, lungs, heart, blood, and nerves. Although RA symptoms can come and go, the disease can worsen over time and may never go away. Early, aggressive treatment is key to slowing or stopping it.

**What Are the Symptoms?** Joint inflammation from RA comes with pain, warmth, and swelling. The inflammation is typically symmetrical, occurring on both sides of the body at the same time (such as the wrists, knees, or hands). Other symptoms of RA include joint stiffness, particularly in the morning or after periods of inactivity; ongoing fatigue, and low-grade fever. Symptoms typically develop gradually over years, but they can come on rapidly for some people.

**Who Gets It?** It usually strikes between ages 30-60, but younger and older people can get it. About 1% of the U.S. population has the condition, which is two to three times more common in women than in men. You're more likely to get it if you smoke or if you have a relative who has this disease.

**What Causes It?** Scientists don't know exactly why people get RA. Some people may have a genetic risk for it that gets triggered by a particular infection that experts haven't yet identified.

**How Does It Affect the Joints?** Inflammation of the lining of the joints can destroy cartilage and bone, deforming the affected joints. As the condition progresses, joints can become painful and not work as well.

**What Does It Do to the Rest of the Body?** RA can affect organs and areas of the body other than the joints, including:

- Rheumatoid nodules (shown here): firm lumps under the skin and in internal organs
- Sjogren's syndrome: inflammation and damage of the glands of the eyes and mouth; other parts of the body can also be affected
- Pleuritis: inflammation of the lining of the lungs
- Pericarditis: inflammation of the lining surrounding the heart
- Anemia: not enough healthy red blood cells
- Felty syndrome: not enough white blood cells. Also linked to an enlarged spleen.
- Vasculitis: blood vessel inflammation, which can hamper blood supply to tissues

**What Is Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA)?** Juvenile RA is the most common type of arthritis in kids. Like adult RA, it causes joint inflammation, stiffness, and damage. However, it can also affect a child's growth. Juvenile RA is also known as juvenile idiopathic arthritis. "Idiopathic" means the cause is unknown.

**RA and Pregnancy.** Surprisingly, rheumatoid arthritis improves in up to 80% of women during pregnancy. It will likely flare up after the baby is born. Why this happens is unclear. You may need to make changes in your medication before you conceive and during pregnancy.

**What Doctors Will Check On.** Because symptoms may come and go, diagnosing RA in its early stages is challenging. If you have these symptoms, your doctor may order further tests:

- Morning joint stiffness
- Swelling/fluid around several joints at the same time
- Swelling in the wrist, hand, or finger joints
- Same joints affected on both sides of your body
- Firm lumps under the skin (rheumatoid nodules)

**Blood Tests You May Get.** If your doctor thinks you have RA, they may give you blood tests to check for signs of inflammation in the body. Other common tests are for rheumatoid factor (RF) and "anti-CCP" (anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide), which most people with RA have. There is no single test for RA, though.

**Imaging Tests You May Get.** X-rays can help diagnose RA and provide a baseline for comparison later as the disease progresses. You may also get an MRI or ultrasound to look for joint damage and inflammation.

**Treatments for RA.** Although there is no cure, treatment can lower joint inflammation and pain, prevent joint damage, and help keep your joints working. You should start ASAP. Your doctor will make a plan based on your particular case, including your age, affected joints, and how severe the disease is. It will include medication and exercise to strengthen muscles around the joints. Some people need surgery.

**Medicines.** Medications used to treat RA include drugs that slow or stop the disease, steroids, and pain relievers. You may need to take more than one type of drug. For instance, you may take one for pain and another to protect your joints from further damage.

**Is Surgery an Option?** If you have a lot of joint damage or pain, your doctor may suggest surgery. Joint replacement (especially hips and knees) is the most common type for people with RA. Other types of surgery include arthroscopy (inserting a tube-like instrument into the joint to see and repair damage) and tendon reconstruction.

**Other Treatments.** Some people with RA get relief from using moist heat, acupuncture, and relaxation. Supplements that have been shown to possibly help RA are fish oil, borage seed oil, and cat's claw. Check with your doctor before you start supplements as they can cause side effects and may interact with your medications.

**What About Diet?** Although there's no "rheumatoid arthritis diet," many people with RA find that eating or avoiding certain foods helps their symptoms. Foods high in saturated fats (bacon, steak, butter) raise inflammation in the body. Omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, tofu, walnuts) may be helpful. Some people feel that other foods -- such as tomatoes, citrus fruits, white potatoes, peppers, coffee, and dairy -- worsen RA symptoms.

**Dive In!** Regular exercise can help those stiff, painful joints. It also keeps bones and muscles strong. Choose exercises such as gentle stretching, resistance training, and low-impact aerobics (swimming, water aerobics). Use caution with any activity that puts pressure on the joints, like jogging or heavy weight lifting. When you have a flare, take a short break from exercise. If you are not active now, talk to your doctor before you get started.



### Rheumatoid Arthritis and Food: Myths and Facts

**Myth: Avoid "Nightshade" Veggies.** There's talk out there that tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, and peppers can make your RA symptoms worse. Take this advice with a grain of salt. There's no hard evidence that foods from the nightshade family are a problem. So don't skip these brightly colored veggies that are loaded with nutrients. As with all of these myths and facts, you should consult with your doctor for the best advice for your treatment and lifestyle.

**Fact: Eat Fish to Curb Inflammation.** You can't go wrong with salmon, tuna, mackerel, and sardines. They're loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, which are superstars in the fight against tender joints and stiffness. They may even let you cut back on medication -- with your doctor's OK, of course. To get the most benefits, try to eat at least a 3- to 6-ounce serving of fish a couple of times a week.

**Myth: Apple Cider Vinegar Cuts Pain.** It's a popular home remedy for achy joints, but don't follow the crowd on this one. Despite claims that a nutrient called beta-carotene can

fight RA, there's no proof it does. And even if that ingredient were useful, there's only a tiny amount in apple cider vinegar. You're better off using the stuff to dress your salad.

**Fact: Fiber Is Your Friend.** Feel free to dig into foods with plenty of this stuff. It's a good way to help you fight back against RA. Studies show it can lower your levels of a chemical called C-reactive protein (CRP), which is a sign of inflammation. So how much do you need? Fill a quarter of your plate with whole grains and half your plate with fruits and veggies at each meal.

**Myth: Stay Away From Citrus.** There's no proof that cutting it from your menu will improve your RA symptoms. If you avoid these fruits, you'll miss out on key nutrients like vitamin C, which helps build new cartilage in your joints. So go ahead and enjoy that morning grapefruit -- it does a body good.

**Fact: Green Tea May Slow Joint Damage.** If you're a fan of this drink, go for it. Though there is not strong scientific evidence for this, green tea is brimming with nutrients that calm inflammation and ease pain. More research is still needed, but some of the antioxidants in green tea may actually slow cartilage destruction. Another one blocks the production of molecules that are known to cause joint damage. Steep your tea bag in hot water for 5 minutes to get the most out of it. If you like, chill it and add a lemon wedge and a spoonful of honey.

**Myth: Dairy Makes RA Worse.** You don't have to cut milk, cheese, or yogurt from your diet. There's not much evidence that your joints will feel better if you skip those foods. And keep in mind that some RA meds put you at greater risk for osteoporosis, so you don't want to miss out on dairy's bone-building benefits.

**Fact: Beans Fight Inflammation.** They've got a lot going for them. For one thing, they're high in fiber and muscle-building proteins. But there's more. They come loaded with nutrients that boost your immune system, like folic acid, iron, magnesium, potassium, and zinc. Pinto and kidney beans will give you the biggest bang for your buck.

**Myth: Raw Food Diets Slow Down RA.** It's an ultra-restrictive food plan and it's just not worth it. It's true that one study in the 1990s found that people who followed a raw vegan diet -- with some probiotics added in -- got some relief from their symptoms. But overall, it didn't put the brakes on the progress of their disease.

**Fact: Processed Foods Are No Good.** While omega-3 fatty acids help ease inflammation, omega-6 fatty acids may do the opposite. They're found in oils like corn, safflower, peanut, and vegetable. And they also show up in a lot of snack foods. An easy fix: Clear your pantry of chips, crackers, and packaged baked goods. Stock up instead on healthier things like fresh fruits, raw veggies, hummus, nuts, or popcorn.

**Myth: Gin-Soaked Raisins Ease Pain.** It may sound bizarre, but some people swear it's a remedy for RA pain. The supposed science behind why it works: The sulfur used to preserve raisins can prevent joint damage, and juniper berries -- which flavor gin -- are anti-inflammatory. While this folk remedy probably won't hurt you, it's not likely to relieve your pain.

**Fact: Jury's Still Out on Gluten.** Is there a link between gluten and joint pain? For people with a disorder called celiac disease, there definitely is. But for RA, the answer isn't so clear. A lot of people say their symptoms get better when they cut out it out of their diet, but there's not a lot of research to back that up. Still, it may be worth discussing with your doctor.

**Myth: The Right Diet Cures RA.** If a diet claims it can knock out your condition forever, beware. Some meal plans may help with symptoms like achy joints and morning stiffness, but it isn't going to make your disease go away. A shift in your eating habits works best when it's part of an overall treatment strategy that you work out with your doctor.



### Ways to Manage RA Pain

**Rub on Capsaicin.** This is the stuff that gives chili peppers their heat. When you put it on your skin, it blocks pain signals. Capsaicin comes in creams, gels, and patches. One study found that people who used capsaicin cream daily for a month (along with other arthritis medications) had their arthritis pain eased by 57%. Before trying it, dab a little on first to make sure you're not allergic.

**Dip Your Hands or Feet Into Wax.** With a paraffin bath, you dip your hands or feet into melted wax that's heated to a safe temperature in a special machine. After it hardens, you wrap the area in a plastic sheet to trap in the heat. After about 20 minutes, you peel the wax off. Research shows that this may ease arthritis pain and stiffness for some people. Talk with your doctor or a physical therapist to see if it might help you.

**Put on a Pain Patch.** Over-the-counter pain patches have medicines that are taken in through your skin, like menthol and camphor. These ingredients made from plants can create cold or hot feelings, which may affect pain signals. Other patches include lidocaine, which causes a numbing feeling, or salicylates, which have the same pain-relieving substance as aspirin. Research suggests these patches can help some, but they wear off quickly.

**Move Around Gently.** During a flare, it's tempting to spend all day in bed. While resting is good, you should try to keep moving, too, to keep your joints from getting too stiff. You might sit down and slowly raise and lower your legs. Or gently spread your fingers apart then bring them together. But don't overdo it. If a movement causes more pain, stop right away.

**Keep Your Stress in Check.** Research shows that worrying can make your rheumatoid arthritis worse and make you more tired. To manage your stress, carve out at least 15 minutes each day to unwind. Meditation can help ease anxiety and depression. Or choose your own relaxing activity, like deep breathing, sitting outside in the sunshine, or simply watching the suns

**Get a Gentle Massage.** This can do more than leave you feeling relaxed and help with arthritis pain and stiffness. It may also improve your muscle strength. But before getting one, check with your doctor to make sure it's safe. Gentle to moderate pressure is best; don't put too much pressure around any affected joint. You can go to a massage therapist, recruit a friend, or give yourself a massage.

**Use a Brace or Splint.** These support swollen, painful joints and let them rest. They also can align joints and help them work better. Wearing a splint or brace may also prevent deformities caused by rheumatoid arthritis, like crooked fingers. You can use one on your wrist, finger, ankle, or feet joints. You wear some while you sleep or rest, while others help ease pain throughout the day.

**Practice Guided Imagery.** This is a type of therapy where you create visions in your mind. For example, you might picture yourself on a serene beach, breathing deeply as your pain floats away. This practice helps you relax and handle discomfort better. Research shows that it lowers pain, stress, and anxiety in people who have arthritis. To get started, ask your doctor about therapists or classes. There are also audiobooks, CDs, and online resources.

**Wear Compression Garments.** These garments, like socks, sleeves, and gloves, use gentle pressure to boost blood flow. They also may help with swelling from a flare. You can wear socks or stockings to ease foot and ankle pain, and gloves (sometimes called arthritis or therapy gloves) can soothe aching fingers and wrists. When you wear these items, check the skin underneath often to make sure it doesn't get red or irritated.

**Try TENS.** This small machine sends low-voltage currents through patches on your skin. It's not clear how TENS works, but one theory is the electricity affects pain signals. It may also trigger endorphins, chemicals that are your body's natural painkillers. Research is mixed, but some studies suggest that doing TENS 15 minutes a day eases joint pain and boosts muscle strength. You can buy a TENS unit to use at home, but talk to your doctor first.

**Draw a Warm Bath.** The water's warmth relaxes your muscles and eases stiff, painful joints. It also helps your circulation and takes pressure off your joints. The bath doesn't have to be steaming hot; aim for a temperature between 92 and 100 F. For more benefits, add Epsom salt. It has magnesium, a mineral that may help with swelling. Soak for about 20 minutes. A hot tub or Jacuzzi is another option, but don't stay in longer than 10 to 15 minutes.

**Use a Heating Pad.** Heat relaxes your muscles and boosts your blood flow, bringing nutrients to your joints and muscles. To turn up the heat, put a heating pad on the aching joint for 20 minutes at a time. Place a towel or T-shirt beneath the pad to protect your skin. Or make your own by putting a wet washcloth in a microwave-safe bag. Heat it for 1 minute and wrap it with a towel. You can also use an electric blanket.

**Put on an Ice Pack.** Cold numbs nerve endings and slows your blood circulation to ease swelling. Wrap a bag of ice or frozen vegetables in a towel and put it on the joint. Leave it there for no more than 20 minutes at a time. You can also make an ice pack by freezing 2



cups of water and 1 cup of rubbing alcohol in a leakproof bag. Or soak the painful area, such as your hands or feet, in a container of ice and water.

**Dress in Light Layers.** Cold weather may make arthritis symptoms worse. To beat the chill, dress in lightweight layers -- they trap body heat without weighing you down. Start with clothing made from a wicking fabric, such as silk or a nylon blend, and top it with a warm layer, such as fleece or a sweater. Headed outside? Add a weatherproof jacket, scarf, hat, and gloves.

**Make Sleep a Priority.** Getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep is even more important during a flare. Not scoring enough shut-eye can trigger inflammation and the release of stress hormones, and it can make dealing with pain harder. While your aching joints may make it tough to nod off, having good habits can help. For a better night's rest, stay away from alcohol, caffeine, and large meals before bedtime. Try to go to bed and wake up around the same time each day.

**Eat a Healthy Diet.** Filling your plate with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans is good for arthritic joints. Also add some healthy fats, such as nuts and olive oil, which can ease inflammation. Eating this way can help you stay at a healthy weight, and that's important because extra pounds put pressure on painful joints. Also load up on fish that have omega-3 fats, which have been shown to help ease joint pain.



### Health Hazards When You Don't Wash Your Sheets

Source: *WebMD*

#### **Undercover Trouble**

You spend a third of your life in bed. So clean bed linens should be one of your must-do chores. Think of the drool, sweat, dandruff, and other "stuff" you leave between the sheets. Ideally, you ought to launder them weekly, or at least every other week. But a recent survey found that Americans tend to be sheet slackers, going 25 days between washes.

#### **Mite-y Gross**

You shed 500 million skin cells a day. Many slough off while you roll around in bed. All those dead cells pile up on your sheets in between washings. Tiny dust mites love to feed on the shed cells. The critters and their droppings can trigger allergies, asthma, and cause your itchy eczema to flare. If you're allergic to dust mites, wash bedding every week in hot water.

#### **Pet Peeves**

Do you sleep with your fur baby? Rover or kitty's hair and dander on your bedding become extra buffet fare for dust mites. If your dog has a skin condition called mange also called animal scabies you fortunately can't catch it from him but your skin can turn itchy and irritated. Your pets also can pass on a fungal infection called ringworm of the scalp. Aim to change your sheets once a week.

### **Bacterial Bed Buddies**

Dead skin cells, sweat, saliva, and more can turn your comfy bed into a petri dish for germs to grow. For instance, lab tests found that swabs from pillowcases unwashed for a week harbored 17,000 times more colonies of bacteria than samples taken from a toilet seat.

### **Bedroom Breakouts**

Is your acne worse and you can't figure out why? Your dirty pillowcase could be to blame. The embedded dirt, dead skin, and bacteria can clog your pores. If you have bad breakouts, change your pillowcases every 2-3 days and the rest of your bedding once a week.

### **Sickly Sheets**

If you or your partner has been ill, toss your sheets into the wash right away to kill any lingering germs. Most bacteria or viruses can survive on soft surfaces for minutes to hours. The duration varies based on the specific microbe. For example, flu viruses live on tissues for just 15 minutes, but some stomach bugs can survive on fabrics for 4 hours.

### **Pillow Toss**

Where you rest your head at night can be full of fungus—some can be dangerous to those with asthma. If your pillow -- the fluffy thing itself—can be washed, do so at least twice a year. Follow the care label on how to do it. Make sure to rinse and dry it well to prevent mildew. If you use a pillow protector, toss it into the wash along with your pillowcase.

### **Sheet Swaps**

Some other things can add to the icky factor between your sheets. Strip the bed weekly (or even more often) if you:

- Sleep in the nude
- Snack in bed
- Sleep with your kids
- Sweat a lot at night

### **Let Your Sheets Breathe**

You may have heard that the best way to kick start your day is to make your bed. But it might be wise not to rush. That's because moisture builds in your sheets after each night of slumber. When you wake up, peel back the covers and give your bed a chance to dry. That makes it a less attractive nesting spot for bacteria and mites.

### **Wash Day Tips**

Laundry your bedding with the hottest water suggested on the care label. Afterward, toss it into the dryer. Studies show the dryer's heat can kill some germs that survive the wash. If it's safe for the color, use a germ-killer like bleach on your sheets, especially if you're cleaning up after a sick person.

### **Dirty Duvets and More**

Some comforters or duvet covers aren't machine washable. So check labels before you launder. Stick to this cleaning schedule for a fresh bedroom:

- Comforters, blankets, and duvet Covers: Once every 1-2 months. (If you don't use a top sheet, wash them when you do your sheets.)
- Mattress pad: Wash four times a year
- Bed skirt: Every 3-6 months

Vacuum your mattress when you launder the bed skirt to suck away dust and dirt.

### **Bedbugs**

These critters aren't lured by dirty or clean sheets. They're attracted to you. They live in warm places close to people, so your bed is perfect. Bedbugs crawl out at night and feed on your blood. You may wake up with itchy bite marks. The bugs travel to your home from places that are infested, like a hotel, dorm room, neighbors apartments, schools, workplace on your jackets. In other words--they are almost everywhere! Dry your bedding on high heat for 30 minutes to kill the bugs and their eggs.



### **Drink Like A Centenarian: The Top 5 Beverages For Longevity**

*Source: [www.optimistdaily.com](http://www.optimistdaily.com)*

Currently, the oldest person on the planet is an impressive 118 years old. However, new research suggests that we could theoretically live up to 150 years. Imagine all the things we could accomplish with that kind of time!

To increase your chances of a long and healthy life, take some notes from the experts on how to increase your health span (which is the amount of time you spend feeling spry and healthy). The best part? Their recommendations are actually quite easy to follow! In fact, some of the most delicious drinks are also the best for promoting longevity.

According to Dan Buettner, a researcher of Blue Zones (places where people live the longest without chronic disease), people in these zones tend to drink coffee, green tea, black tea, water, and even wine on a daily basis for decades or even a century. It's not just a coincidence either— separate scientific research backs up the benefits of these beverages too. So, let's raise a glass to a long and fulfilling life filled with all our favorite drinks!

#### **The top 5 beverages for longevity, according to Blue Zones founder Dan Buettner**

**Green Tea.** Buettner claims that in Okinawa's Blue Zone, people may fill up a 20-ounce jar of green tea leaves and drink it throughout the day. He gives two reasons why this may help them acquire centenarian status at a higher rate than the overall population.

"First of all, caffeine has come out as a net positive, and it's associated with lower rates of Diabetes and Parkinson's, lower rates of heart disease, and sharper focus," he explains. That said, he warns against drinking it in the afternoon, as the caffeine content could interfere with your sleep.

The other reason green tea is a great choice for those looking to increase their longevity, according to both Dan Buettner and registered dietitian Neva Cochran, is that it's high in flavanols, a type of antioxidant that has been linked to a reduction in bad cholesterol and better cardiovascular health.

Additionally, the catechins found in green tea, along with its caffeine content and L-theanine, protect the brain and have been linked to better attention, memory, and improved mood. Green tea has also been linked to lower fasting blood sugar levels, which could be protective against the development of type 2 diabetes, as well as improved bone and gut health.

**Black Tea.** Many of the same benefits apply to black tea as they do to green tea. Caffeine, antioxidant polyphenols, L-theanine, and flavanols are also present. As a result, it protects against the development of a variety of chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cancer, stroke, and cardiovascular disease. Plus, it's actually better for the gut and digestion than green tea.

**Coffee (black).** Good news for the coffee lovers out there: your daily cup of joe is not only delicious but also packed with beneficial antioxidants and essential nutrients that can improve your health and well-being. According to Buettner, coffee is the primary source of antioxidants in the American diet and its consumption is linked to improved risk for various diseases, including type 2 diabetes, depression, neurodegenerative diseases, cancer, and liver disease.

But the benefits don't stop there. Coffee is also rich in essential nutrients like vitamin B5, manganese, potassium, magnesium, and niacin.

**Water.** Water is one of the most healthful beverages that you can drink! It's vital for our bodies, and it's incredibly refreshing without any additives or chemicals that can cause harm. As Buettner shares, in all Blue Zones, people drink water with their meals, and it's not a complicated concoction of fancy drinks. According to him, the water in Blue Zones may be even more healthful than other places because of its cleanliness.

"If you ask a centenarian what explains the longevity of the area, they'll say good food, clean air, and freshwater," Buettner explains, emphasizing the importance of water for a healthy life. In Costa Rica, for instance, the water that bubbles out of the earth in the Nicoya Peninsula is rich in calcium and magnesium, which can be beneficial for bone health and heart function. Buettner notes, "When you have high levels of calcium and sunshine, those two conspire to make your bones stronger, so people have fewer fractures and fewer fatal falls."

**Red Wine.** Alcohol has been a controversial topic when it comes to its health benefits. However, Buettner, who has extensively studied the Blue Zones, suggests that a moderate intake of alcohol can contribute to a longer and healthier life. Despite acknowledging the risks associated with drinking, Buettner suggests that in all five Blue Zones, people consume a small amount of alcohol daily, and it positively impacts their quality of life.

Moderate alcohol consumption is linked to higher flavonoid or antioxidant absorption, which can lower cortisol levels and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Moreover, drinking in moderation fosters social connections, which are a vital aspect of longevity.

Although alcohol is not for everyone, Buettner emphasizes that drinking in moderation, specifically one drink per day can be an excellent addition to a healthy diet. Buettner encourages consuming alcohol with a plant-based meal to maximize its health benefits.



Birthdays

April	
Ella Mae Atkinson	1
Maudie Goodrum	2
Madison Walker	2
Gabrielle Patrick	10
Stella Oluokun	12
Elijah Davis	13
Patricia Boone	13
Joyce Kamara	17
Christine Freeman	17
Kathleen Jones	18
William Butler, III	18
Flossie Branch	20
Denise Lynch	22
Letitia Ross	22
Kimberly Jones	24
Michelle Finney	24
Kenneth E. Bowman	25
Shavaughn Scott	28
Robert Neal	30

May	
Micaela Miles	1
Ezekiel Davis	2
Jeff Miles, Jr.	3
Philip Hazell	3
Mel Jenkins	4
Shamario Scott	8
Jade Winbush	10
Ishmael Kamara	12
Shirley Scott	15
Wayne Fells	20
Thomas Proctor	20
Leonard Sledge, Jr.	23
Daryl Barber, Jr.	25
Tina Brown	26



June	
Deborah Butler	1
Barbara McIntosh	4
Taylor Wright	10
Reginald Miller	11
Brooke Roberts	13
Simone Dixon	16
Helen Plater	21
Donald Jackson	22
Harry L. Laury	24
Daryl Barber, Sr.	26
Susan Walker	27
Taylor Ware	27
Charmaine Van Dyke	30



Wedding Anniversaries



From The Newsletter Editor

A Creed To Live By

By Nancye Sims

Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others.

It is because we are different that each of us are special.

Don't set your goals by what other people deem important.

Only do what is best for you.

Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them life is meaningless.

Don't let life slip through your fingers by living in the past or in the future. By living one day at a time you live all days of your life.

Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.

Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is the fragile thread that binds us to each other.

Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.

Don't shut love out of your life by saying it is impossible.

The fastest way to lose love is to hold to it tightly, and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

Don't dismiss your dreams. To be without dreams is to be without hope, to be without hope is to be without purpose.

Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you have been, but also where you are going. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savored each step of the way.

Sis. Ellalene Barnaby





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## Never Forget, That


God is our perfect **guide** in life.

His **strength** overcomes our weaknesses.

His **grace** fills our emptiness.

His **presence** overcomes our loneliness.

His **shoulders** carry us through life's difficulties.



**WALK WITH  
GOD EVERY DAY  
AND NEVER  
UNDERESTIMATE  
THE POWER OF  
YOUR PRAYERS**