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Practicing in Boca Raton and the Surrounding Community Since 1979

## SUMMER 2017 - NEWSLETTER

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### The Heat Index

The heat index combines humidity with the temperature. When you are standing in the sun the heat index is even higher. A heat index of 90 or greater is considered dangerous.

### Heat Related Illness

It is summer time and the heat and humidity are higher than at any other time of the year, making us more susceptible to heat related illness. Heat related illness occurs when your body cannot keep itself cool. As the air temperature rises, your body cools off by sweating. Sweating occurs when liquid on your skin surface evaporates. On hot humid days, the evaporation of moisture is slowed down by the increased moisture in the air. When sweating cannot cool you down your body temperature rises and you may become ill.

Some people are at greater risk to develop heat related illness than others. This includes people 65 years of age or older, people with mental illness taking medications and the physically ill; especially those with heart disease, high blood pressure and lung disease. Individuals who have suffered from heat exhaustion or heat stroke in the past have an increased risk of developing recurrent heat illnesses.

When your body overheats due to very hot weather and or exercise in the heat, you are susceptible to heat exhaustion. Patients experience heavy sweating, non-specific weakness and or confusion, dizziness, nausea, headache, rapid heartbeat and dark very concentrated urine.

If you experience these symptoms in the heat you need to get out of the heat quickly. Find an air conditioned building and rest in it. If you cannot find an air conditioned building then get into the shade and out of the sun. Start drinking cool liquids (avoid caffeine and alcohol which exacerbate fluid loss and heat related disease). Take a cool shower or bath or apply cool water to your skin. Remove any tight constricting clothing. If you do not feel better within 30 minutes you must contact your physician or seek emergency help.

Untreated or inadequately treated heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke. Heatstroke occurs when the internal body temperature rises to 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Heatstroke is far more serious than heat exhaustion. It can cause damage to your internal organs and brain and it can kill you. Patients with heatstroke are running a fever of 104 degrees or higher. They complain of severe headaches with a dizzy or lightheaded feeling. Their skin is flushed or red in appearance and they are NOT sweating. Many will be experiencing severe and painful muscle cramps accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Their heartbeats are rapid, their blood pressure low. They may be agitated, anxious and disoriented with some experiencing epileptic type seizures.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency and you must call 911 immediately. While you are waiting for help to arrive remove their clothing after taking the patient to an air conditioned or shady place. Wet the skin with water and fan the skin if possible. If you have access to ice or ice packs place them on the patient's neck, back, groin and armpits while waiting for help.

Heat illness is preventable. When the heat index is over 90 and you must go outside wear lightweight, light-colored, loose fitting clothing. Wear a hat or use an umbrella. Apply sunscreen SPF 30 or greater 15-20 minutes BEFORE going outside. Drink plenty of water before you go out and 2-4 glasses of cool water each hour you are outside working in the heat. Avoid alcohol and caffeine including soda with caffeine. Take frequent breaks every 20 minutes and drink water or sports drink even if you do not feel thirsty. Try to schedule your outside work for before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. to avoid peak sun exposure.

If you are being treated for chronic medical conditions ask your doctor how to prevent heat illness. Antihistamines, some blood pressure medications (beta-blockers and vasoconstrictors), diet pills, anti-depressants and antipsychotics impair your ability to control your internal body temperature. Water pills to prevent excessive fluid lead to dehydration. Anti-epilepsy and anti-seizure medicines impair your body's ability to regulate internal temperatures as well.

### **Travelling Overseas This Summer? Health Precautions**

If you are preparing to travel overseas please access the Center for Disease Control's website and travel section and look for your destinations to receive the latest health updates and recommendations for healthy travelling. Go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and look for your destination in the alphabetical listing. If you need vaccinations please make sure to leave enough advance time to receive the scheduled vaccines. Many of the vaccines recommended including yellow fever, polio are not routinely stocked at your physician's office or pharmacy and will require a trip to the County Health Department or a visit to a travel medical office such as Passport Travel to obtain the suggested vaccines.

You should consider reviewing your health insurance policy and asking if it covers injuries and illnesses occurring overseas. You will be surprised at how poor most overseas medical coverage is. AIG and Allianz are reputable firms with travel health packages that are affordable (\$200- \$300 per year) and usually include medical evacuation programs if necessary. Certain credit card companies supply travel health insurance but their medical evacuation plan only covers travel to the nearest facility that will provide your needed service, not the facility you choose. Fortunately there are reasonably priced plans that include evacuation to the facility of your choice. Your insurance agent and travel agent should be able to provide you with travel health insurance options.

You will want to have your essential medical records with you either on a USB Flash drive or a disc. You will need your family contacts, your doctors' contact information, your medication list, your medication allergies and your active medical problem list. A copy of your most recent electrocardiogram and any recent blood tests will be helpful as well. Vaccination and immunization history and records are required at some destinations so access those as well. Some medical practices offer a patient portal that you can access via the internet with the correct user name and password. Please make sure you review the suggestions listed above to make sure your doctor's portal gives you access to the records you will need abroad. Certain countries require a letter or prescription from your physician for all prescription medications especially controlled substance medications. Without such documentation you will not clear customs. Check with your travel agent or the CDC website for that information. When in doubt call the office and we will assist as best we can. Travel safely and have fun this summer!

### **Hurricane Season: Health Related Preparations**

The 2016 hurricane season began on June 1. We suggest the following preparations especially since we have not had a direct hit locally in over a decade and most of the local residents have not lived through a hurricane experience.

- a. Create a Hurricane Plan.
- b. Decide well in advance if you plan to stay in your home or evacuate.

- c. If you decide to leave plan to leave days in advance of the storm.
- d. Create a plan to communicate with loved ones and friends.
- e. Have a plan to protect your home, property and pets.
- f. If you require a special needs shelter you must download the application at [abc.gov](http://abc.gov) special needs program application and mail it to the Special Needs Coordinator, 20 South Military Trail, West Palm Beach FL 33415.
- g. Assemble a two week supply of food, water, medicine and other needed items. Even if FEMA and local authorities respond rapidly you may need several weeks of supplies to sustain yourself before their help is available.

The office phone numbers will be forwarded to another location out of the area. If there is electricity and phone service we should be reachable at 561 368 0191. If that does not work then call my satellite phone at 1.254.240.9301. Satellite phones require me to be outside with the antennae pointed towards the stars. Leave a message and I will be checking the voicemail frequently.

Hospital emergency rooms will be open before and after the storm. The Emergency Departments lock down and shut down during the storm. The Emergency Medical Services 911 paramedics will not be allowed to drive once the winds reach 35 MPH. Boca Raton Regional Hospital is now staffed with full time residents in medicine and surgery so there will be doctors at the hospital to care for arrivals and inpatients during and after the storm until your personal physician can assume care. With communications down in the storm aftermath the hospitals have sent police officers to their homes if they need the doctor to come to the hospital. The office will open for services as soon as electricity is restored, the fire sensing equipment is functional and the Fire Marshall permits the reopening of the building.

### **The Benefits of Exercise Continue to Shine**

I write often in my blog for my patients about the benefits of exercise, especially as we age. I came across three interesting articles recently that support that position. Dr. Duck-chul Lee, a professor of Kinesiology at Iowa State University reviewed exercise data at the prestigious Cooper Institute in Dallas. The Cooper Institute was created by cardiologist Kenneth Cooper MD, the father of Sports Medicine. Dr. Lee's evaluation of Cooper's data was published in the journal Progress in Cardiovascular Disease.

The study confirmed that running, whatever a person's pace or mileage, reduced a person's risk of death prematurely by almost 40% independent of the individual's smoking and alcohol drinking history and health problems such as high blood pressure or obesity. They found that one hour of running statistically lengthens life expectancy by seven hours. Looking at that over 40 years resulted in a net life extension of 2.8 years after subtracting the time you spent running.

A supporting study just appeared in the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology. Researchers compared the exercise level of 1,664 heart attack patients in Denmark including 425 who died immediately. Those who had been physically active were less likely to die. The risk of death decreased as exercise levels rose. Patients who had light to moderate exercise regimens were 32% less likely to die and 47% less likely to die in patients pursuing moderate to heavy exercise.

Which type of exercise is best? Researchers at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota compared sedentary lifestyle to weight lifting, interval training on a bicycle ( pedaling hard for four minutes, resting for three and then repeating that sequence three more times) or riding a stationary bike at a modest steady pace for 30 minutes. All these participants had a pre-study assessment of their aerobic fitness, their blood sugar levels and mitochondrial gene activity and energy production health in muscle cells. This required muscle biopsies pre-study and post study.

All participants experienced improvements in blood sugar levels and regulation at 12 weeks. Those who lifted weights had the largest gain in muscle mass. Those doing interval training had the most improvement in endurance.

Of most interest was the fact that the oldest participants, over 64 years of age had a major improvement in the mitochondrial cells energy and efficiency production with almost 400 genes working more like younger cells than older cells. The lead researcher hypothesized that exercise at any level, but especially at intervals, somehow corrected the changes seen in aging muscles.

Based on this data I will surely change my routine to incorporate some vigorous bursts of increased activity to try and derive the benefits of interval training without foolishly pushing too hard and hurting myself. So should you.

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