

Beacon of Light

July—September 2023 • Volume 6 • Issue 3

"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

A Book of Hebrew's Labor Day Challenge

For many, Labor Day marks the transition from a summer season of vacation, rest, and relative inactivity to a new season where work, school, or other official responsibilities are resumed. Just as Memorial Day in May signifies the unofficial start of summer and, perhaps, renewed opportunity for leisure, relaxation, and travel, Labor Day has a way of subtly shifting us back to reality. We are

reminded that it's time, once again, to prepare ourselves for going to bed at a decent hour, while also reluctantly resuming the habit of setting our daily wake-up alarm.

In the New Testament Book of Hebrews, the focus of our most recent congregational Bible Study, the anonymous author, who we'll call "the preacher", as our study guide does, is reminding his first century Christian audience in so many words that "play time" is over, and that it's now time once again to take seriously the inherent obligations that come when considering oneself a follower of Jesus Christ.

(continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue	
Pastor's Corner	Page 1
Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement—Make Your Talent and Skills Matter	Page 3
Kidz Corner	Page 4
Keeping You Informed	Page 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 Ebenezer Scholarship Recipient Rayonna Gibson • Congratulations to Thomas Brown, III on His Remarkable Achievement • Why a New COVID-19 Variant Has Scientists Worried • African Americans At Greater Risk To Develop Alzheimer's Disease • New Alzheimer's Diagnosis Common Among Older People Who Had COVID-19 • Things That Raise Your Chances of Dementia • Medical Marijuana: What You Should Know • What You Should Know About Opioids • The Powe of Herbs: Turmeric 	Page 8 Page 9 Page 10 Page 12 Page 13 Page 14 Page 16 Page 18 Page 21
Birthdays	Page 23
Anniversaries	Page 24
From the Newsletter Editor	Page 25

Pastor's Corner (continued from page 1)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-30)

Fearing that his audience was in danger of drifting away and taking their salvation for granted, the preacher reminds them time and again that salvation is not a “one and done” transaction, but is, instead, an on-going, dynamic process of demonstrating one’s gratitude and fidelity to Christ. And contrary to what some may have been led or conditioned to believe, the preacher is reminding his first century audience, and us by extension, that our salvation will be determined by the consistent daily responses we make to this sacrificial gift offered on our behalf.

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...” (Hebrews 5: 7-9)

In this new post-Labor Day season, we must ask ourselves whether our day-to-day response to this great gift of Christ’s full and complete obedience to God, sacrificial death, and ultimate source of eternal salvation will be one of lavish gratitude and willing service? Or, to the contrary, we will we remain wedded to and stuck in our summer seasons of limited availability and relative inactivity.?

Labor Day should be for Christians what it is for everyday laborers and workers: a return to the unfinished work before us. For those who seek to cloak themselves in the mantle of Christ, it is the resumption of our commitment to make Christ our highest priority in life, and a return to the fields of service where **“the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” (Mt. 9:37)**

As of the first Sunday of September, all mandatory COVID-related protocols have been lifted. God has been faithful to us throughout these intervening years of pandemic and personal disruption. It is now time to give strong evidence of our mutual and unyielding loyalty and commitment to the One whom the preacher says is the **“appointed heir of all things”.** (Hebrews 1:2) It is now time to accept the preacher’s challenge for a 21st century church: **“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:23-25)**

Blessings to all in this new post-Labor Day Season!

Pastor Mark D. Venson



Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

Make Your Talent and Skills Matter

Source: Daily Hope



“Use every part of your body to give glory back to God.”—1 Corinthians 6:20 (TLB)

When you’re getting ready to be used by God, he doesn’t just want to see that you’re spending your *time* on the most important things. He also wants you to use your *talents* in view of eternity.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:20, “*Use every part of your body to give glory back to God*” (TLB).

There’s a big misconception about heaven that even many Christians have. Some people think that when you get to heaven, all you’re going to do is kick back and eat ice cream, wear a white robe, play a harp, and float on clouds. But none of those things are in the Bible!

So what are you going to do for all those trillions of years when you get to heaven?

God has plans for you to serve in heaven. You’ll have specific things to do in heaven—enjoyable things that allow you to serve God. Right now, he’s giving you time on Earth to practice serving. And he’s watching to see whether you take advantage of that opportunity.

Some people sit on the bench all through life, living for themselves. They expect to arrive in heaven and say, “Okay, God, take me off the bench and put me on the A team. Let me serve you now.”

But that’s not how it works. Why would God give you a place of serious service in eternity when you’ve done little or nothing to practice serving in this world?

People also misunderstand what they’re going to take with them to heaven. You’re not going to take any of your money to heaven. You’re not going to take any of your possessions to heaven. You’re not going to take a single material thing to heaven.

What are you taking to heaven? Only two things: your character and your skills. God wants you to understand that *right now* is your opportunity to get ready for the real thing. Right now is the time to develop your serving skills and build your character to be more like Jesus.

Are you doing anything to use your talents for God? Or are you using all your talents on yourself? God wants you to serve him well here on Earth *and* forever in heaven.

Talk It Over

- What misconceptions have you had about heaven? What have you learned about heaven today?
- In what ways are you using your skills and talents to serve God? In what ways are you using your skills and talents to serve yourself?
- What is one practical way you can start developing your serving skills?



KIDZ CORNER



We hope all the children and youth enjoy a healthy, happy and safe school year!!



Back to School Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your never-ending love and blessings. As this school year begins, bless our children with success in their studies and activities. Grant them courage and energy and wisdom to do their best at all times.

Tips for Getting Better Grades in School

1. **Do Your Homework!!**
2. Participate in class, answer questions, stay awake.
3. **Take Good Notes.**
4. Ask for Help.
5. Turn off the TV, games, and other distractions.
6. Study even if you do not have homework.
7. Find a study partner.

REPORT CARD	
Reading	A+
Writing	A+
Mathematics	A+
Science	A+
History	A+
Art	A+
P.E.	A+

HEALTHY EATING

from

HEAD TO TOE

eyes
vitamin A (beta carotene)

brain
fiber
healthy fats
vitamin E

hair
protein
zinc
iron

teeth
calcium
vitamin D
phosphorus

heart
magnesium
fiber
healthy fats

digestive system
fiber
healthy fats
good bacteria

skin
vitamin A (beta carotene)
vitamin C
water

muscles
protein
potassium

bones
calcium
vitamin D
phosphorus

Fuel your body!

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Develop Good Habits

Draw a line to the correct item



Eat healthy



Pray about everything



Control your anger



Smile God loves you



Go to bed and get rest.



Exercise

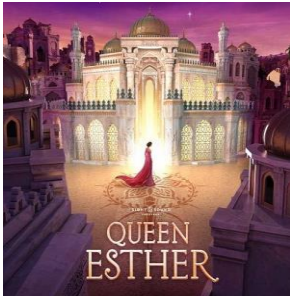
Live on Purpose and find positive fun!



Remember – When times get hard:



Joseph continued to be patient and never lost faith in God.



Queen Esther was afraid but stepped out on faith and saved

A BACK-TO-SCHOOL PRAYER



Loving God, thank you for the rest and relaxation we enjoyed over the summer. Today, we pray for our children as they begin their new school year. Bless them with joy at seeing friends, excitement at new experiences, and a love of learning. Watch over all who learn, replacing fear with joy, anxiety with peace, and tiredness with energy. Grant teachers wisdom, patience, and joy in serving their students. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Keeping You Informed

**2023 Ebenezer Scholarship Recipient
Rayonna Gibson**



Rayonna Gibson is a recipient of the 2023 Ebenezer Scholarship Award. She is the daughter of Raynika Gibson, the granddaughter of Kimberly Briscoe, and the Great-granddaughter of Gabrielle Patrick. From childhood, Rayonna attended Ebenezer United Methodist Church and participated in its various children and youth ministries. She attended Sunday School, sang in the children's and youth choirs, served as an acolyte, and attended Vacation Bible School.

As a graduate of the Kipp DC Legacy College Preparatory School, she was one of the top ten students in her graduating class. She applied to thirteen colleges and was accepted by all of them. During her graduation ceremony, her honors included recognition for her activities in the National Honor Society, attending dual enrollment college classes, and participating in sports. Rayonna will be attending Bennett College where she will study Media and Journalism.

All of Ebenezer's high school scholarship applicants are asked to complete a one-page essay that describes **“What God has done for you and where would you be without His love and guidance in your life.”**

Excerpts from Rayonna's essay give God the glory when she proclaims that:

“God's love has been an unwavering source of comfort, strength, and inspiration in my life.

His love has provided me with the confidence to embrace my unique qualities, celebrate my successes and navigate challenges with resilience. Furthermore, God's guidance has been instrumental in shaping my character and fostering personal growth. Through his teachings and scripture, I have gained wisdom, moral guidance, and a compass to navigate life's complexities.

God's love and guidance have been instrumental in shaping my identity, personal growth, and sense of purpose. His unwavering love has provided me with comfort, strength, and inspiration, while his guidance has offered direction and wisdom.

Through His love and guidance, I have found purpose, meaning, and a deep sense of interconnectedness with the world around me. I am eternally grateful for God's unfailing love and His continuous presence in my life.”

On behalf of the Ebenezer UMC family, we congratulate Rayonna for her success and pray for God's continuing guidance as she moves on to the next phase of her life. Additionally, we congratulate her family for their love and guidance during her formative years. To God be the glory for the things that He has done.

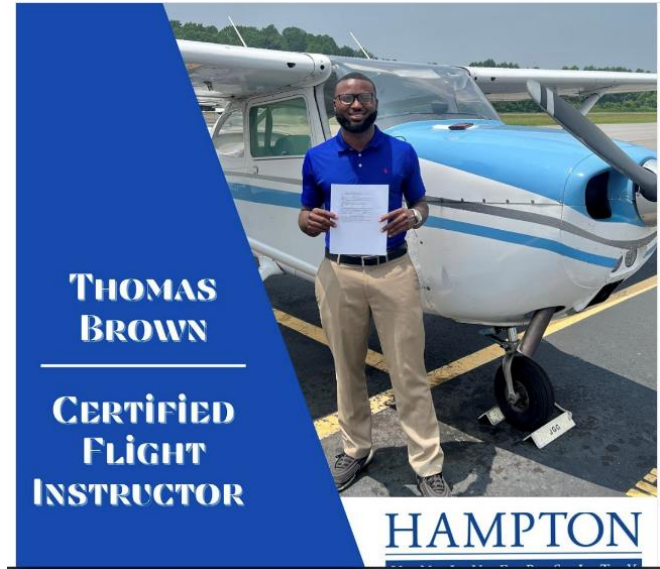
Submitted by Sis. Gloria Pickett

Congratulations to Thomas Brown, III on His Remarkable Achievement

Thomas Brown, III (Trey) is a student at Hampton University where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Aviation. He is the son of Shanti and Thomas Brown, Jr. and the grandson of Joan and Thomas Brown, Sr.

Hampton University Aviation has announced on its Instagram page that Trey is the **youngest** Certified Flight Instructor in Hampton University's history to achieve this **“mark in just three years.”** On behalf of the entire Ebenezer church family, we pray for the continuing success of this young man as he reaches for the stars.

Congratulations Trey!!

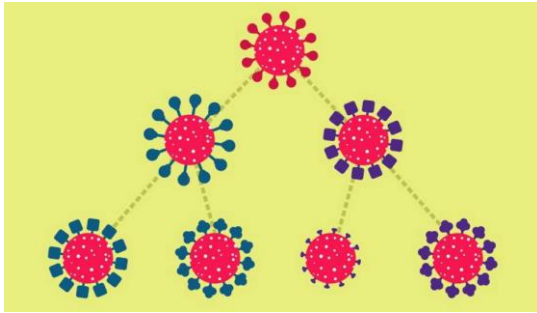


Submitted by Sis. Gloria Pickett



Why a New COVID-19 Variant Has Scientists Worried

Source: AARP, By Rachel Nania*, August 29, 2023



Rapid mutations could make the BA.2.86 strain, nicknamed Pirola, better at infecting people

A new coronavirus variant is grabbing the attention of health experts across the globe due to a striking number of genetic differences that set it apart from previous versions of the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says this new variant, officially known as

BA.2.86 and nicknamed “Pirola” on social media, may be more capable of infecting people with prior immunity, though it’s unclear at this time whether those infections would result in more severe illness.

This new variant is not yet widespread. Only two cases of COVID-19 caused by BA.2.86 have been confirmed in the U.S., with a few others confirmed in Denmark, Israel, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, according to an August 23 risk assessment from the CDC. Its arrival, however, coincides with a late-summer COVID-19 surge that has put the virus back on the minds of many.

After several months of steady decline, COVID-19 hospitalizations have risen in recent weeks, and wastewater surveillance suggests cases are increasing, too. Deaths from the illness are also up by about 21 percent, federal data shows, though they remain low compared with previous surges.

Mutations put the variant ‘high on radar screen’

All viruses change over time, including the one that causes COVID-19. These changes can affect how contagious a virus is or how well it responds to treatment, the CDC explains, which is why scientists keep close tabs on the coronavirus’ evolution.

What’s concerning about BA.2.86, however, is that it has *a lot* of changes — there are more than 35 mutations relative to the omicron strains that have recently been circulating. According to the CDC, that’s a difference that is more in line with those seen between the initial omicron variant and its predecessor, delta.

“This is an insane amount of change at once,” epidemiologist Katelyn Jetelina wrote in a recent Substack post examining BA.2.86.

The location of these mutations matters too, says Andy Pekosz, a professor of microbiology at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health: “A lot of those mutations are in areas where we know antibodies bind to the spike protein,” which is what the virus uses to enter our cells.

“Those mutations are on important sites that would cause this virus to evade a lot of the vaccine and previous infection-induced immunity,” Pekosz says. “So that’s why that variant is really high on our radar screen.”

Treatments, tests, and vaccines still work

That doesn't mean the tools we have are necessarily powerless if this variant becomes more widespread. Experts say existing tests used to detect the virus, and medications used to treat COVID-19, should still be effective when it comes to BA.2.86.

The CDC also expects that the updated vaccines, due out in mid-September, will "be effective at reducing severe disease and hospitalization," even in the wake of the genetic differences, though evaluation of just how well they'll work against BA.2.86 is ongoing.

"Vaccines oftentimes will continue to protect against severe disease, even if they lose the ability to protect against infection," Pekosz says. When it comes to BA.2.86, "we're hoping that it can't evade enough to really cause very severe disease at a high rate," he says.

Plus, it's important to keep in mind that the forthcoming vaccines target the variants that are currently driving infections in the U.S., like Eris (EG.5) and other XBB strains.

"So right now, the plan for rolling out the vaccine and getting a vaccine looks pretty good because it's well-matched to the vast majority of [variants] that are circulating right now," Pekosz says.

Get a COVID-19 plan in place

While health experts don't yet know how well BA.2.86 spreads, they do know that it spreads in the same way as previous variants, meaning the same measures used throughout the pandemic to cut down on transmission still work for BA.2.86.

Make sure you're up to date on your vaccines, the CDC says. Stay home if you are sick, and wash your hands often. And with COVID-19 cases climbing, and cold and flu season right around the corner, consider wearing a mask again in crowded indoor areas if you have stopped, Pekosz says.

"If you want to protect yourself, masks are one of the things that you can do if you're in that highly vulnerable population," he adds.

It's also a good time to check your stock of COVID tests (and check their expiration dates) so that if you come down with symptoms, you'll have some on hand. If you test positive for COVID-19, you may be eligible for antiviral treatments, which can help keep a mild infection from turning more severe.

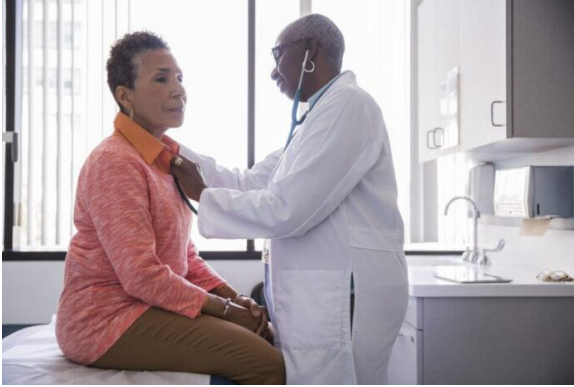
"Now's not the time to panic or to fear the worst," Pekosz says. "Now's the time to really sort of say, 'What would I do if I was positive for COVID? Do I have a home test? How would I get antivirals? And when would I get the vaccine when it comes out?' Because those are all things that we know limit severe COVID."

Rachel Nania writes about health care and health policy for AARP. Previously she was a reporter and editor for WTOP Radio in Washington, D.C. A recipient of a Gracie Award and a regional Edward R. Murrow Award, she also participated in a dementia fellowship with the National Press Foundation.



African Americans At Greater Risk To Develop Alzheimer's Disease

Source: BLACK HEALTH MATTERS.COM



According to the CDC, the number of Alzheimer's disease cases are predicted to rise to an estimated 14 million people by 2060. Unfortunately, African Americans are twice as likely as whites to develop the disease—and scientists may have found a biological clue that may help explain why.

A 2019 study of 1,255 people, both black and white, found that cerebrospinal fluid from African Americans tended to contain lower levels of tau protein, a protein linked to Alzheimer's. However, these low levels did

not seem to protect African Americans from developing the disease. This led scientists to conclude that the disease may develop differently in African Americans and because of that, they may be more vulnerable to the disease.

This study did not address other underlying factors that may impact why African Americans are more at risk, including higher instances of heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. Researchers have also presented evidence that stress and poverty as well as lower levels of education and greater exposure to discrimination are also possible risk factors.

Alzheimer's disease is a brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills. It is also the most common cause of dementia among older adults. In most people, symptoms first appear in their mid-60s. But in rare cases, Alzheimer's can start to occur as early as age 30.

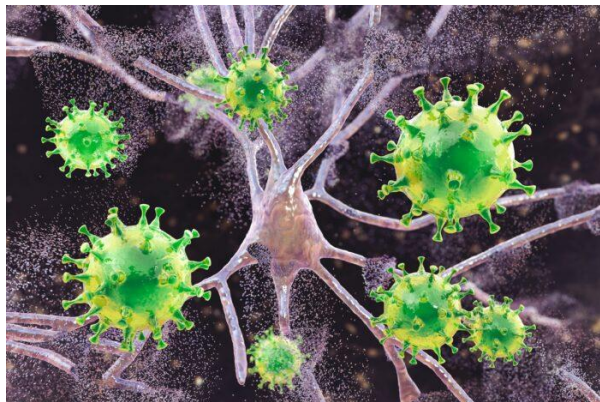
The best way to get ahead of this disease is to take charge of your brain health. One way is to watch what you eat. According to the National Institute of Aging, following the Mediterranean Diet can help lower high blood pressure, a risk factor for Alzheimer's. Increasing your physical activity can also help prevent the disease.

There are additional resources you can use to protect yourself. [UsAgainstAlzheimer's \(https://usagainstalzheimer.org\)](https://usagainstalzheimer.org) recently launched [BrainGuide \(https://mybrianguide.org\)](https://mybrianguide.org), a brain health platform. Once you take their confidential memory questionnaire, they offer tailored education and resources to help you find the best next steps in your brain health journey.



New Alzheimer's Diagnosis Common Among Older People Who Had COVID-19

Source: BLACK HEALTH MATTERS.COM



A recent study showed that over 6 million people 65 and older with **COVID-19** had a higher risk of being diagnosed with **Alzheimer's disease** within the year. They showed that COVID-19 didn't cause the condition but could cause inflammation that may exacerbate changes in the brain.

"In the Alzheimer's brain, the pathology starts to build up about 20 years before the symptoms begin," said Dr. David Holtzman. However, researchers need decades of monitoring after a COVID-19

infection to determine a cause.

"The brain has its immune response to the pathology involved in [Alzheimer's] disease progressing," said Holtzman, who was not part of the new study. "When there are other things that cause inflammation in the body that can affect the brain, likely what happens is that can even amplify the process that's already going on."

Unfortunately, other viruses can cause similar inflammation. COVID is just another potential risk factor. This is another reason why vaccination is essential, not just against COVID.

The latest study by the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* showed about seven new diagnoses of Alzheimer's disease for 1,000 seniors who had contracted COVID in the past year. The recent findings call for more research on the underlying mechanisms of Alzheimer's disease. Thus, explaining the association. However, in this new study, the diagnosis of Alzheimer's was "mostly tentative," said Dr. Eliezer Masliah, director of the Division of Neuroscience at the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Aging.

Alzheimer's Statistics

About 6.5 million people over the age of 65 with the condition. And in 2020, it was the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S.

"Alzheimer's disease is a serious and challenging disease, and we thought we had turned some of the tides on it by reducing general risk factors such as hypertension, heart disease, obesity, and a sedentary lifestyle," said Dr. Pamela Davis, a research professor at Case Western Reserve University and co-author of the new study.

"Now, so many people in the US have had Covid, and the long-term consequences of Covid are still emerging. It is important to continue monitoring this disease's impact on future disability."



Things That Raise Your Chances of Dementia

Source: WebMD, Medically Reviewed by Carol DerSarkissian, MD

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. About a third of people 85 and older show signs of the disease. The genes you get from your parents play a part at this age, but so do things like diet, exercise, your social life, and other illnesses. Dementia isn't a normal part of getting older.

Heart Disease

It could lead to a heart attack or stroke, which makes dementia more likely. Heart disease is usually caused by plaque buildup in arteries around your heart (atherosclerosis). That can slow blood flow to your brain and put you at risk for stroke, making it harder to think well or remember things. And many things that cause heart disease -- tobacco use, diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol -- also can lead to dementia.

Air Pollution

An English study found older adults who lived in areas with the highest yearly concentration of air pollution were 1.4 times more likely to get dementia than people who lived in places with cleaner air. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (micro-particles in the air you might not see but can inhale) caused the most harm.

Diabetes

Doctors aren't sure exactly why people with diabetes get dementia more often. However, they do know that people with diabetes are more likely to have damaged blood vessels. This can slow or block blood flow to the brain and damage areas of the brain, leading to what's called vascular dementia. Some people may be able to slow brain decline if they keep diabetes under control with medicine, exercise, and a healthy diet.

Poor Sense of Smell

Older people who have trouble identifying odors are more than twice as likely to have dementia as those with a sharp sense of smell. Almost half of people in an American study who'd been diagnosed with dementia had had olfactory dysfunction 5 years before. A simple smell test can flag a need for early treatment.

High Cholesterol

High levels, especially in middle age, are linked to obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. All of these raise your risk of dementia, but it's not yet clear if the cholesterol by itself adds to the problem. Some research shows that high cholesterol in midlife could raise your chances of Alzheimer's disease later in life, but the exact link isn't clear.

Herpes

Herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV1), or oral herpes, usually appears as blisters or sores on or around your mouth. But the virus can also get into and infect your brain. A recent study linked HSV1 with a decline in some mental functions, but not to dementia. However, lab studies on a realistic brain model showed HSV1 triggered major Alzheimer's signs, including swelling and clumps of protein in the brain tissue.

Depression

If you have depression or have had it in the past, you may be more likely to get dementia. Scientists aren't yet sure that it is a cause. It may simply be an early symptom or a sign of other causes like Parkinson's disease or Huntington's disease. Talk to your doctor or a therapist if you feel down for more than 2 weeks, and right away if you think of harming yourself. Therapy and medication can help with depression.

Eating Patterns

Super-starchy and processed foods never make the "healthy" list. But did you know eating the two together can up your chances of having dementia? French researchers found people who developed dementia often paired processed meats – i.e. ham, pepperoni, and deli meats – with high carbs like potatoes, alcohol, and baked sweets. Meanwhile, people who stayed healthy ate their share of meat – but enjoyed it with fruits and veggies.

Head Injury

A single, mild traumatic brain injury may not make you more likely to get dementia later in life. But more severe or repeated hits or falls could double or quadruple your chances, even years after the first injury. Get to the hospital if you've hit your head and you pass out or have blurry vision, or feel dizzy, confused, nauseated, or become sensitive to light.

Loneliness

Feeling lonely over time can increase your chances of having dementia, even when your overall risk of getting the disease – such as with genetics or age – is low, a 10-year study found. People under age 80 who reported feeling alone were twice as likely to have dementia as those who didn't feel that way. Time is key, though. People who recovered from their loneliness didn't have the same risk.

Obesity

If you have a lot of extra weight in middle age, you may be more likely to get dementia later in life. Extra pounds raise your risk for heart disease and diabetes, which are also linked to dementia. You can check your BMI (body mass index) online to see if it's in the "obese" range. Your doctor can help you set a weight loss goal that's right for you. A healthy diet and regular exercise could help you turn things around.

Genes

Dementia doesn't have to run in your family for you to get it, but genes make a difference. A parent or sibling with Alzheimer's raises your odds. Genes seem to matter more in some types of dementia than others. But even risky genes don't mean you'll get dementia. If you're thinking about genetic testing for Alzheimer's, ask your doctor about the pros and cons -- and genetic counseling. Doctors don't routinely recommend those tests.

Sleep

Many people have a bad night of sleep now and then. But if it happens often -- you wake up a lot or don't sleep enough -- you could be more likely to get dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, or make it worse. It may help to try and keep a healthy

sleep routine: Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and electronics in the evening, and set up a soothing bedtime ritual with regular bedtime hours.

Smoking

It seems to put you at risk of getting dementia, possibly because it's bad for your blood vessels. And it definitely makes you more likely to have a stroke, which can and often does damage the brain and cause vascular dementia. That might lead to problems with thinking or remembering. Talk to your doctor or a mental health professional if you smoke and want support to quit.



Medical Marijuana: What You Should Know

Source: WebMD; Medically Reviewed by Jennifer Casarella, MD

What Is It?

Medical marijuana is derived from the Cannabis sativa plant. Humans have turned to it as an herbal remedy for centuries, and today people use it to relieve symptoms or treat various diseases. The federal government still considers it illegal, but some states allow it to treat specific health problems. The FDA, the U.S. agency that regulates medicines, has approved one cannabis-derived drug product cannabidiol (Epidiolex) to treat certain seizure disorders.



Key Ingredients

Marijuana has chemicals called cannabinoids. Medical researchers usually focus on the health effects of two in particular: delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC is the substance that makes you high; CBD doesn't have mind-altering effects.

Forms of Medical Marijuana

There are a variety of ways to take the drug. You can inhale a vaporized spray, smoke the leaves, take a pill or liquid, or bake it into foods. All of the types differ in terms of how often you should use them, how they'll affect your symptoms, and the side effects you may feel.

How It Works in Your Body

The chemicals in marijuana affect you when they connect with specific parts of cells called receptors. Scientists know that you have cells with cannabinoid receptors in your brain and your immune system. But the exact process of how the drug affects them isn't clear yet.

What Does It Treat?

State laws differ on the conditions that you can legally treat with medical marijuana. But you might be allowed to use it if you have Alzheimer's, ALS, cancer, Crohn's disease, epilepsy, seizures, hepatitis C, AIDS, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, posttraumatic stress disorder, chronic pain, or severe nausea. But scientists aren't sure that it helps all of these conditions. The research is most clear that it can work as a painkiller, to stop vomiting during chemotherapy, to relieve some MS symptoms, and to treat a few rare forms of epilepsy.

Are There Risks?

If you smoke it, you could have breathing problems such as chronic cough and bronchitis. Research has linked cannabis use and car accidents. If you use it while pregnant, you may affect your baby's health and development. Studies also show a tie between pot and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.

FDA-Approved Versions

Besides the approval of cannabidiol (Epidolex) as a treatment for two rare kinds of epilepsy, the FDA has also approved three synthetic cannabis-related drug products: Marinol (dronabinol), Syndros (dronabinol), and Cesamet (nabilone). If you have nausea caused by chemotherapy, you might take a synthetic cannabinoid, either dronabinol or nabilone. Dronabinol also can help boost the appetite of people with AIDS.

Laws in Conflict

California was the first state to legalize medical marijuana, in 1996. As of March 2021, 36 states in the U.S. have done so. (Recreational weed is also legal in some places.) However, the federal government still considers it an illegal drug, which can create confusion. For instance, even if you have a prescription, the Transportation Security Administration doesn't allow cannabis in your luggage.

How Do You Get It?

The rules vary, depending on where you live. Generally, you'll need to consult with a doctor and have a condition that your state has approved for treatment with cannabis. You might get an ID card. In some areas, you buy products at a specific store called a dispensary.

Do People Become Addicted?

Doctors don't know much about the addiction risk for people who use the drug for medical reasons, and it needs more study. But people who use marijuana to get high can go on to have substance misuse issues. The most common problem is dependence. If you're dependent, you'll feel withdrawal symptoms if you stop using. If you're addicted -- a more severe problem -- you're unable to go without the drug.

Why Don't We Know More?

Although cannabis has been an herbal remedy for centuries, the evidence for how well it works is lacking in many cases. Scientists prefer large studies with certain types of controls before they draw conclusions, and much of the research thus far hasn't met those standards. Products vary in strength and it's hard to measure doses, which has made judging the benefits of marijuana even more complicated.

An Opioid Alternative?

Could cannabis help solve issues involving these powerful painkillers? In some states, prescriptions for this pain medicine fell and researchers found a link to fewer overdose deaths. Another study found a link between pot use and abuse of these narcotic drugs. Scientists need more evidence before they can say for sure.



What You Should Know About Opioids

Source: WebMD; Medically Reviewed by Carol DerSarkissian, MD

What Are They?



Also called narcotics, opioids are a kind of pain medication your doctor may give you after an accident or surgery, or as treatment for a chronic disease like arthritis. Most are made from the opium plant, but some (called synthetic opioids) are made in a lab. Either way, they affect the reward center of your brain and boost your levels of certain brain chemicals that block pain, slow your breathing, and generally make you feel calm.

Types

Opioids have different strengths, and some are legal and some aren't. Examples include:

- Codeine
- Meperidine (Demerol)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin)
- Oxycodone and acetaminophen (Percocet)
- Fentanyl
- Hydrocodone and acetaminophen (Lortab, Norco, Vicodin)
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Heroin.

Short-Acting vs. Long-Acting

Short-acting opioids, like Vicodin or Percocet, get medication into your system quickly. When you take them as directed, like immediately after surgery, you probably won't have any issues. But if you take them for too long, it may be hard to stop. Long-acting opioids, like OxyContin, give your body a smaller amount of medication over a longer time. They're used to treat diseases that cause chronic pain, like fibromyalgia or arthritis.

How to Use Opioids

If your doctor prescribes them for you, be sure to follow the directions. It's usually best to take them on a regular schedule. If you wait until the pain is bad, you might need more medication, which makes you more likely to have side effects.

Common Side Effects

All medications have side effects, and opioids are no different. The most common one with short-term use is constipation. Others include:

- Depression
- Hot flashes
- Erectile dysfunction
- Weight gain
- Weak immune system.

Dependence

The longer you take opioids, the greater the chances that your body will get dependent on them. If that happens, you may have withdrawal symptoms -- like anxiety, a fast heart rate, sweating, nausea, and chills -- when you stop taking them. This is more likely if you try to stop too quickly instead of tapering off slowly. Talk to your doctor about how to stop safely.

Dependence vs. Addiction

If you've become addicted to an opioid, you'll have strong cravings for it that will be hard to resist. Other signs can include:

- Using more than your doctor prescribed
- Feeling powerless to stop the cravings
- Acting irresponsibly, possibly in an effort to get more drugs
- Mood swings, irritability, and feeling agitated.

A Growing Problem

While most people use these medications safely, up to 12% of people who take them for chronic pain become dependent on or addicted to them. From there, some people move on to street drugs. About 80% of people who use the illegal opioid heroin say they misused a prescription one first. Heroin is often cheaper and easier to get.

What Raises Your Chances of Addiction?

Anyone can become addicted to opioids, especially if they don't follow their doctors' instructions. But some people may be more likely to than others. This includes people who:

- Have had addiction issues with alcohol, tobacco, or other substances
- Have a family history of substance abuse
- Are in their teens or early 20s
- Are female. (Women report chronic pain more often, and they may also become dependent more quickly than men.)

Treatment for Addiction

If you've become addicted, you may need a specialized program that could include medication to ease withdrawal symptoms, counseling to deal with cravings and depression, and guidance to help you avoid a relapse. For help with an opioid addiction, contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

What to Do in Case of Overdose

This can be life-threatening. If you think someone might have overdosed, call 911 right away. Warning signs include:

- Loss of consciousness or being very sleepy
- Slow or irregular breathing
- A slow pulse
- Vomiting
- Small pupils.

If you or a loved one is dealing with opioid addiction, ask your doctor about a prescription nasal spray called naloxone (Narcan) that can quickly reverse the effects of an overdose. You may be able to keep it on hand in case of an emergency.

Other Options for Pain Relief

Ask your doctor if a strong nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), like diclofenac (Cataflam) or prescription-strength ibuprofen, might work for moderate pain. For chronic pain, you might try nondrug treatments like massage, exercise, or acupuncture, along with non-opioid medication.



The Power Of Herbs: Turmeric

Source: Blackandfit.com



Although it is thousands of years old, turmeric is a spice that has become more popular in the U.S. in the past few years. It is the spice that makes curry powder yellow. But even more than adding color to food, turmeric has several health benefits.

This spice is great at fighting free radicals, protecting the liver against toxins, and encouraging circulation.

Health Benefits of Turmeric

1. **Anti-Inflammatory Powerhouse:** Chronic inflammation is at the root of many modern diseases, from arthritis to heart disease. Turmeric's anti-inflammatory properties help alleviate inflammation by blocking the activity of certain enzymes and molecules involved in the inflammatory process.
2. **Antioxidant Armor:** The body's constant exposure to free radicals can lead to oxidative stress, which in turn contributes to aging and various diseases. Curcumin, the active compound in turmeric, acts as a powerful antioxidant, neutralizing free radicals and protecting cells from damage.
3. **Joint Support:** Turmeric's anti-inflammatory properties can offer relief to those suffering from joint pain and arthritis. Regular consumption of turmeric may help improve joint flexibility and reduce discomfort.
4. **Heart Health:** Curcumin's ability to improve endothelial function, lower LDL cholesterol levels, and reduce inflammation contributes to overall cardiovascular health. It's no wonder that cultures that incorporate turmeric into their diets often boast lower rates of heart disease.
5. **Brain Boost:** Some studies suggest that curcumin could potentially enhance brain function and support cognitive health. Its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects might play a role in preventing neurodegenerative diseases.
6. **Digestive Aid:** Turmeric has been used traditionally to aid digestion. It can stimulate bile production, which aids in the breakdown of fats, and soothe digestive discomfort.
7. **Skin Savior:** The anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties of turmeric make it a popular ingredient in natural skincare. It may help with conditions like acne, eczema, and psoriasis.

Try this delicious golden turmeric latte that you can make at home.



Ingredients

- 2 cups coconut or almond milk
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ½-1 tablespoon agave or maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch of ground nutmeg
- Pinch of cardamom
- Extra ground nutmeg or coconut shavings for topping

In a small, stainless steel pot, whisk all ingredients together and heat for 3-5 minutes. Stir consistently for a smooth consistency.

Serve in mugs and top with more nutmeg or coconut shavings.

Caution: Extended use of turmeric can result in stomach distress.

Nutrients in turmeric: calcium, iron, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, vitamins B1, B2, B3, and C

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These statements are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.



Birthdays

July	
Naomi Jones	2
Curtis Bell	4
Melani Finney	6
Brandi Walker	6
Asahni Proctor	7
Deborah Brown	9
Barbara Ligon	9
Lillie Clark	9
Elton Sherard	10
Phyllis Bell	13
Bill Porter	14
Anne Seymour	16
Brianna Pickerall	17
Rochelle Scott	18
Gaston Finney, Jr.	22
Allison Porter	23
James Pickett, Sr.	27
Wesley Brown	28
Rayonna Gibson	31
Corlissa Avery	31

August	
Kevin Jackson	1
Gloria Pickett	4
Kendall Harris	6
Victoria Jones	7
James Stemley	10
Sean Bowman	10
Jeffrey Miles, Sr.	26
Alex Porter	28
Juanita Williams	30
Joan Brown	30

*May the love of Christ illuminate
your present and future and
fill it with happiness
that comes from above.
Happy Birthday!*

September	
Mary Blackburn	3
Troy Booth	3
Brittani Walker	8
Griselda Clemons	12
Matthew S. Brown	16
Stacey Montgomery	19
Michelle Dixon	21
Terri Ware	21
Gaston Finney, III	24
Howard Branch	24
Carolyn Jackson	25
Winnifred Butler	25
Joan Harris	26
Joyce Stokes	27
Treasa Harris	28



Wedding Anniversaries

Billy & Linda
Porter
July 8, 1989
[34 years]

Elton & Angelene
Sherard
July 10, 1970
[53 years]

James & Gloria
Pickett
July 16, 1966
[57 years]

Leonard & Janet
Sledge
July 17, 1965
[58 years]

Ronald & Peggy
Dearing
July 25, 1970
[53 years]

Andrew & Joyce
Kamara
September 15, 1984
[39 years]

Cleveland & Naomi
Jones
September 21, 1977
[46 years]

Reginald & Bernadette
Miller
September 28, 1991
[32 years]

Wayne & Ina
Fells
August 18, 1979
[44 years]

William & Emma
Murdock
August 28, 1976
[47 years]

Michelle & Gaston
Finney
September 3, 1989
[34 years]

From The Newsletter Editor

Live A Life That Matters

Author Unknown

Ready or not, someday it will all come to an end.
There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.
All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten, will pass to
someone else.
Your wealth, fame, and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.
It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.
Your grudges, resentments, frustrations, and jealousies will finally disappear.
So, too, your hopes, ambitions, plans, and to-do lists will expire.
The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.
It won't matter where you came from, or on what side of the tracks you lived,
at the end.
It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant
Even your gender and skin color will be irrelevant.
So what will matter?
How will the value of your days be measured?
What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built; not what
you got, but what you gave.
What will matter is not your success, but your significance.
What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.
What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage, or sacrifice that
enriched, empowered, or encouraged others to emulate your example.
What will matter is not your competence, but your character.
What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how many will feel a
lasting loss when you're gone.
What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that live in those who
loved you.
What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom, and for what.
Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.
It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.
Choose to live a life that matters.

Sis. Ellalene Barnaby





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Your 'Kindness' may be treated as your
weakness,

"Still Be Kind"

Your help to others may go unneeded &
unnoticed,

"Still Be Helpful"

If you are 'Honest' & 'Frank', people may
cheat you,

"Still Be Honest"

The Good you do today, people will
often forget tomorrow,

"Do Good Always"

Because its between You & GOD..
It was never between You & Them...