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Summer 2021 Health Matters



COVID-19 and PTSD: The Pandemic's Hidden Trauma

Throughout her career, Tamar Rodney, an assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, has committed herself to researching various forms of trauma. Through her psychiatric work and her research identifying the biomarkers of PTSD in veterans, Rodney has become an expert in determining the various ways we react to traumatic events.

One of the unique challenges of addressing COVID-19-related trauma is the sheer omnipresence of the disease and the degree to which it has impacted our lives. Rodney says much research of trauma is based around the concept of trauma being a singular event that produces an outcome. The pandemic, on the other hand, has been an escalating series of events that have impacted our social, medical, and emotional lives.

According to Rodney, PTSD can often be delayed for months or even years. She said it's going to be important to keep an eye out for symptoms in others and ourselves. The main four symptoms of PTSD are:

- **Intrusion:** When memories or concerns about trauma interrupt a flow of thought or emotional well-being
- **Avoidance:** Purposefully avoiding people, places, or things that remind you of the trauma
- **Negative Mood:** Reacting to life in a negative manner or not at all
- **Hyper Arousal:** Not in keeping with an individual's regular reactions, including difficulty sleeping, irritability, and difficulty concentrating

Rodney said there are a number of things we can do to help combat these feelings, including developing healthy coping systems like taking time out of our schedules, validating our feelings, limiting caffeine and alcohol, and attending therapy.

source: hub.jhu.edu/2021/04/16/covid-19-ptsd/

COVID-19 Vaccination

The COVID-19 vaccine is a safer way to help build protection. While getting COVID-19 may offer some protection, current evidence suggests that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is uncommon in the months after initial infection, but may increase with time. The risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 far outweighs any benefits of natural immunity. COVID-19 vaccination will help protect you by creating an antibody (immune system) response without having to experience sickness.

COVID-19 vaccines will help protect you from getting sick or severely ill with COVID-19.

- Large-scale clinical trials found that COVID-19 vaccines prevented most people from getting COVID-19.
- All COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States are effective at preventing COVID-19.
- It typically takes about two weeks for the body to build protection after vaccination. That means it is possible you could still get COVID-19 soon after vaccination. This is because your body has not had enough time to build full protection, which is why it is important to follow social distancing measures and wear your mask.
- Some people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will still get sick because the vaccines are not 100% effective. When this happens, the vaccination might help keep you from getting seriously ill, based on data from clinical studies.

source: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/work.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/work.html)

Fitness Tip: Back Leg Raises

1. Stand behind a chair. Slowly lift your right leg straight back – don't bend your knees or point your toes.
2. Hold that position for one second, then gently bring your leg back down.
3. Repeat this ten to 15 times per leg.

This strength training exercise for seniors makes your bottom and lower back stronger.

Fraud, Waste, or Abuse?

Report potential fraud, waste, or abuse in the CHRISTUS Health Plan Network by submitting details to the Special Investigations Unit via email, secure fax, or phone.

FWA Hotline: **855.771.8072**

Email:

ChristusHealthSIU@ChristusHealth.org

Secure Fax: **210.766.8849**

If you prefer anonymity, call the Integrity Line at **888.728.8383** or visit ChristusIntegrityLink.org.

For compliance questions or concerns, you can email us at CHPCompliance@ChristusHealth.org

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the newest issue of Health Matters. We hope you have exciting plans for a safe, healthy summer.

In this issue of Health Matters, we discuss PTSD brought on by COVID-19, how tobacco use can affect Men's Health, and protecting yourself from those harmful summer UV rays.

If you are looking for a COVID-19 vaccine, we encourage you to stay in touch with your local health system and local health department.

As always, if you ever have any questions, please feel free to contact Member Services at **844.282.3026**.

Nothing means more to us than knowing we've helped make our members' lives better. We hope you'll feel comfortable recommending us to your friends if they are in need of health coverage, as well.

In good health,

M. Shannon Stansbury
SVP CHRISTUS Health
CEO CHRISTUS Health Plan

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Protect Yourself from UV Radiation

Taking steps to protect yourself from the sun is a year-round responsibility. Protect yourself and others from the sun with shade, a shirt, or sunblock (SPF 15+) all year long.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a form of non-ionizing radiation that is emitted by the sun and artificial sources, such as tanning beds. While it has some benefits for people, including the creation of Vitamin D, it also can cause health risks.

Our natural source of UV radiation is the sun, however there are artificial sources, as well. Some artificial sources of UV radiation include:

- Tanning beds
- Mercury vapor lighting (often found in stadiums and school gyms)
- Some halogen, fluorescent, and incandescent lights
- Some types of lasers

To protect yourself from UV radiation:

- Stay in the shade, especially during midday hours.
- Wear clothes that cover your arms and legs.
- Consider options to protect your children.
- Wear a wide brim hat to shade your face, head, ears, and neck.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays.
- Use sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher, for both UVA and UVB protection.
- Avoid indoor tanning. Indoor tanning is particularly dangerous for younger users; people who begin indoor tanning during adolescence or early adulthood have a higher risk of developing melanoma.

Source: cdc.gov/nceh/features/uv-radiation-safety/index.html

National Immunization Awareness Month

August is National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM). This observance highlights the importance of getting recommended vaccines throughout your life. You have the power to protect yourself and your family against serious diseases, like whooping cough, cancers caused by HPV, and pneumonia.

During NIAM, CHRISTUS Health Plan encourages you talk to your doctor, nurse, or other health care professional to ensure you are up to date on recommended vaccines.

We also encourage you to visit CDC's Interactive Vaccine Guide, which provides information on the vaccines recommended during pregnancy and throughout your child's life.

Source: cdc.gov/ncird/index.html



Tobacco Use and Men's Health

You probably know that tobacco use—particularly cigarette smoking—is harmful to health and can lead to premature death and disease, including, lung conditions, cardiovascular disease, and cancer nearly anywhere in the body.

While no tobacco product is considered “safe,” cigarettes contribute to 480,000 American deaths per year. Cigarette smoke contains a mix of over 7,000 chemicals, including nicotine. Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical present in the tobacco plant. While nicotine is a chemical in cigarettes, it is not responsible for the preventable harms caused by smoking cigarettes, such as cardiovascular disease, lung conditions, and cancer. However, nicotine is the reason people continue to smoke even if they are aware of its dangers and want to quit.

Men who smoke are at risk for heart disease, cancer, lower respiratory diseases, stroke, and diabetes—the first, second, fourth, fifth and sixth leading causes of death among men in the United States in 2015. Nearly all lung cancer—the number one cancer killer of both men and women—is caused by smoking. Smokers are up to 20 times more likely to develop lung cancer than nonsmokers. And men with prostate cancer who smoke may be more likely to die from the disease than nonsmoking men with prostate cancer.

But it is not just cigarette use that can cause health problems for men. Another combustible tobacco product—cigars—can also cause serious health problems. Cigar smoking can cause cancers of the mouth and throat, as users may inhale smoke even if they do not think they are doing so. Additionally, cigar smokers are at an increased risk of cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, such as coronary heart disease, aortic aneurysms, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The best way to protect a man's health from damage caused by tobacco is for him to never start using any tobacco products. But for men who do use tobacco products, quitting is the best option. With smoking especially, the effects of quitting can be seen almost immediately.

It may take several attempts to quit using tobacco products for good, but it is important to remember that every attempt is a learning experience and helps bring you closer to staying quit.

Source: fda.gov/tobacco-products/health-information/tobacco-use-and-mens-health



Honor These Awareness Dates and Stay Healthy

June

Men's Health Month

PTSD Awareness Month

Flag Day (14)

Juneteenth (19)

Father's Day (20)

July

UV Safety Month

Independence Day (4)

August

National Immunization Awareness Month

Purple Heart Day (7)