

ARIZONA MENTAL HEALTH

Families and friends finding help through education and prevention

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Managing back pain

Causes, prevention and treatment options

By Meghann Finn Sepulveda

Back pain can come on slowly and go away on its own or it can be persistent — lingering for weeks or even months. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, about 80 percent of adults experience lower back pain at some point in their lifetime.

Heavy lifting, stress and age-related changes can all contribute to back pain. However, when back pain becomes so bad that it affects a person's ability to work or engage in normal daily activities, it's best to seek care from a medical professional.

What is back pain?

While there are many attributes of back pain, the most common is mechanical in nature as a result of degeneration of the spine. Unlike diagnosing some other medical issues, determining the exact cause or causes of back pain can be very complicated.

"Back pain can be a result of nerves, muscles, joints, ligaments or bones, making it difficult to treat," said Vivek Iyer, M.D., interventional pain management specialist at Cancer Treatment Centers of America®.

Common causes

Causes of back pain include sprains and strains, herniated or ruptured discs, and traumatic injury. The most common causes of back pain are

► **BACK PAIN**, continued on page 2



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CANCER

PREVENTION AND DETECTION

Risk reduction, screenings and vigilance are critical to good health

BY DEBRA GELBART

If you love bronze skin and think a tanning bed is safer than lying out in the sun, Christine Nelson of Mesa wants you to reconsider.

Skin cancer

"There's a reason a tanning bed looks like a coffin," said the 53-year-old retired high school teacher who's been battling a recurrence of melanoma since 2006, 21 years after spending time in tanning beds. "It basically kills you."

Nelson was first diagnosed with melanoma when she was just 22. In Arizona alone, 1,510 cases of melanoma are expected to be diagnosed this year, according to the American Cancer Society. About 250 people in the state will die of melanoma in 2016.

"Experts agree that no amount of time in a tanning bed is safe," said Brittany Conklin, the communications manager for the American Cancer Society in Arizona, who was diagnosed with less-deadly basal-cell and squamous-cell skin cancer just a few years after also using a tanning bed. "You receive high rates of both UVA and UVB rays and about an hour's worth of those rays in 10 to 12 minutes' time," Conklin said. "The rays penetrate through all layers of your skin, too." Conklin also reminds people as often as she can that although basal-cell and squamous-cell cancers aren't usually life-threatening, they can be quite disfiguring. "I have very noticeable scars from my treatment," she said. "I'm reminded every day of time spent in a tanning bed."

Preventing other cancers

You probably already know this advice: eat a largely plant-based diet, exercise regularly and above all, don't smoke.

SMOKING: "Smoking is responsible for approximately 30 percent of all cancer-related deaths in the U.S.," said Rajesh Kukunoor, M.D., an oncologist on staff at Abrazo Scottsdale Campus. The strongest risk factor is for lung cancer, of course, increasing the risk up to 20-fold, he said. But it's also implicated in cancers of the oral cavity, nasal cavity, sinuses, throat, esophagus, pancreas, liver, stomach, cervix, kidney, large bowel and bladder, he said. In addition, smoking is associated with increased incidence of prostate cancer, particularly in African-Americans, and with squamous-cell skin cancer, Conklin pointed out.

CHEWING TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL: Chewing tobacco is no safer, said Michael Roberts, M.D., an oncologist with Arizona Oncology Associates in Phoenix. It can cause oral cancer, esophageal cancer and pancreatic cancer, he said. Excessive alcohol

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► REDUCE your risk of many kinds of cancer by:

- Avoiding tanning beds entirely
- Eating a mostly plant-based diet and maintaining a healthy weight
- Exercising regularly
- Not smoking or chewing tobacco
- Drinking alcohol sparingly
- Not eating charred or well-done meats
- Undergoing a colonoscopy at least once every 10 years beginning at age 50

► INCREASE your chances of detecting cancer in its earliest stages by:

- Undergoing recommended cancer screenings at regular intervals, especially mammography (beginning no later than age 50, but many doctors urge a first screening at age 40), Pap test for cervical cancer (annually for most women under age 65), skin cancer check (once a year) and oral cancer screening (once a year).
- Carefully monitoring and reporting to your doctor any changes in your health that last longer than two weeks.

► Know the ABCDEs of MELANOMA

- A = ASYMMETRY:** One half is unlike the other half
- B = BORDER:** An irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border
- C = COLOR:** Is varied from one area to another; has shades of tan, brown or black, or is sometimes white, red or blue
- D = DIAMETER:** Melanomas are usually greater than 6mm (the size of a pencil eraser) when diagnosed, but they can be smaller
- E = EVOLVING:** A mole or skin lesion that looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape or color

Source: American Academy of Dermatology

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Resources to navigate cancer: Educational programs, integrative therapies and caregiver support

Not all **exercise** is created **equal**.

Learn about the difference between **exercise** and **physical activity**.

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There's a reason they say "ask your doctor." Contact your HonorHealth doctor to answer your questions or call 623-580-5800 to find a doctor who can.

Resources to navigate cancer

Educational programs, integrative therapies and caregiver support

By Meghann Finn Sepulveda

It's understandable to have a lot of questions following a cancer diagnosis. Fortunately there are trained specialists — many available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week — who can provide guidance, resources and support.

"It's important to find someone who can teach you the terminology and understands what you are going through," said Mary Koithan, PhD, RN, director of Community Cancer Connections, associate professor and associate dean of professional and community engagement at The University of Arizona College of Nursing in Tucson. "Whether that is connecting with another survivor or identifying a support group, finding someone who can discuss symptoms and provide tools to reduce stress and find joy is crucial."

Koithan, a 15-year cancer survivor, recognizes that while cancer is a huge part of a person's life, there must be a focus on supporting the person's total wellbeing — body, mind and spirit.

"Staying active and maintaining the essence of who you are is an important part of healing," she said. "Recognize limitations, especially during treatment, but keep up with hobbies and activities that bring you happiness and create meaning in life."

Cancer treatment

Conventional oncology services and integrative medicine are available at Cancer Treatment Centers of America®. Every patient who receives care at the medical facility in Goodyear has access to a multidisciplinary team consisting of an oncologist, surgical oncologist, radiation oncologist, a naturopathic physician and a registered dietitian, among others, to help navigate their individual cancer journey.

"We offer therapies such as massage and acupuncture along with mind-body medicine techniques that provide pain relief, alleviate nausea and fatigue, and manage depression," said Shauna Birdsall, ND, FABNO, director of naturopathic

medicine and integrative oncology, and vice chief of staff at Cancer Treatment Centers of America at Western Regional Medical Center.

Other integrative approaches include support groups, individual and family counseling, laughter therapy and spiritual support.

Patients at Cancer Treatment Centers of America also benefit from organic produce that is grown at the medical center's on-site farm and can take advantage of a beauty salon for assistance with picking out a wig, hat or scarf or receiving nail or makeup services.

"Our salon is a little bit of an oasis that takes the patient away from a clinical setting," Birdsall said. "We use organic and environmentally-safe products so we don't expose patients to any harsh chemicals."

Caregiver support

Family caregivers play an important role in a person's cancer journey by providing

support and assisting with decision-making regarding treatment.

"Caregivers become the patient advocate," said Barbara Kavanagh, founder and CEO of the Arizona Myeloma Network. "But they also need to be reminded to take care of themselves because they count, too."

A little over a decade ago, Kavanagh, who cared for her husband during his cancer treatment, built a grassroots network of resources to increase awareness, promote advocacy and support those with cancer. Today, the Arizona Myeloma Network provides free interactive public seminars, workshops and roundtable discussions and offers various educational programs on specific areas of caregiving such as navigating the healthcare system.

"We teach skills, strategies and new ideas about ways to manage stress and how to effectively talk to healthcare providers," Kavanagh said. "These discussions are a safe place for caregivers to seek support and talk openly and honestly."



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American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society offers the Cancer Survivors Network, an online community where

participants can share personal stories, join discussion boards and chat-rooms, ask questions and get support.

MORE INFO: cancer.org; 800-227-2345

Cancer Support Community Arizona

Cancer Support Community Arizona, located in Phoenix, provides a full range of no-cost support programs in a comfortable home-like setting. The organization offers:

- Drop-in and on-going support groups for patients, family members and caregivers

- Networking groups for people with specific types of cancer
- Educational workshops
- Exercise activities and stress management sessions
- Lectures by oncology experts
- Social gatherings

MORE INFO: cscaz.org; 602-712-1006

Cancer Caregivers Education Program

Join the Arizona Myeloma Network at the Cancer Caregivers Education Program which will take place from 8 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 23 at the Courtyard Marriott Salt River, located at 5201 N. Pima Road in Scottsdale.

"Communication Skills and Tools to

Communicate Your Needs" will be led by Barbara Kavanagh, MSW, founder and CEO of the Arizona Myeloma Network, and Suzanne Hyde, MSW, LCSW, owner of Suzanne Hyde Counseling and Psychotherapy.

MORE INFO: azmn.info; 623-466-6246

Cancer

► continued from the cover

also can contribute to or cause many cancers, including those in the oral cavity, head and neck, esophagus, liver, breast and possibly the colon, Roberts added.

CHARRED MEATS: Certain chemicals are formed when muscle meat — including beef, pork, fish or poultry — is cooked using high-temperature methods such as pan frying or grilling directly over an open flame, Kukunoor (of Abrazo Health) said. In experiments, the chemicals — called HCAs and PAHs — have been found to cause changes in DNA that may increase the risk of cancer.

People who regularly eat burned or charred red meat have a 60 percent higher risk of pancreatic cancer, according to data presented at an American Association for Cancer Research annual meeting, said Chenthilmurugan Rathnasabapathy, M.D., an oncologist with Arizona Oncology Associates in Glendale. Those who preferred very well-done steak were almost 60 percent more likely to get pancreatic cancer as those who ate steak less well-done or did not eat steak, he said, quoting Kristen Anderson of the University of Minnesota, who led the study.

The importance of screenings

Screening for cancer can hopefully catch it in its early stages when it's far easier to treat. Indeed, one screening — colonoscopy — can actually prevent cancer.

Precancerous polyps are identified and

removed during the procedure, thus eliminating the opportunity for them to develop into cancer. It's recommended that most people 50 and over undergo a screening colonoscopy once every 10 years.

"Early cancer detection with routine screening saves lives," said Deanna Wambach, M.S.N., F.N.P.-C, the lead clinician for Planned Parenthood Arizona in Central Phoenix. Screenings, she said, are "vital to cancer's early detection and effective treatment. Screening, in conjunction with human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination, condom use and avoidance of smoking are the best most effective ways to prevent many cancers."

The HPV vaccine, available to individuals between the ages of 9 and 26 and which previously prevented four types of HPV, "has now been updated to protect against nine strains," she said. HPV figures prominently in cervical and other gynecological cancers, anal and some oral cancers.

On the horizon

Erkut Borazanci, M.D., is a medical oncologist and clinical investigator at HonorHealth Research Institute in Scottsdale and medical director of the Institute's early cancer detection program. A strong proponent of cancer screenings such as mammograms, Pap tests, colonoscopies, PSA blood tests for prostate cancer and oral health checks, he is working on developing screening tests for other organs, including the pancreas.

"We've established a program for people at high risk for pancreatic cancer," he said, whether it's genetics or family history that

New Mayo Clinic facility offers latest cancer therapy

A new building that houses the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center on Mayo Clinic's Northeast Phoenix campus is now open. Mayo Clinic Building-Phoenix is a \$310 million, 400,000-square-foot, three-story facility that also houses the new Proton Beam Therapy program.

PROTON BEAM TECHNOLOGY: Proton beam therapy uses a beam of energy to irradiate cancerous tissue. The beam of protons can be very narrowly focused on only the patient's tumor cells, thus minimizing damage to healthy tissue. Mayo's \$180 million proton beam facility is the length of a football field so that it can accommodate the technology's 80-yard-long particle accelerator and beam line.

The Hitachi Synchrotron particle accel-

erator weighs approximately 90 tons. The 30,000-square-foot proton beam therapy area on the Cancer Center's concourse level is part of the 165,000-square-foot Radiation Oncology department.

EDUCATING AND EMPOWERING: In addition to offering the newest cancer treatments like proton beam therapy, the Cancer Center holds seminars, live classes and online education programs open to Mayo patients and the public. Topics include living with cancer, strategies for overcoming cancer and disease-specific subjects related to chemotherapy, vascular lines, nutrition, radiology and surgery.

MORE INFO: mayo.edu, 800-446-2279

—Susan Lynne Fuchs

may put them at risk, Borazanci said. He added that right now, he and his team are using magnetic resonance imaging and a technique called endoscopic ultrasound to check for pancreatic tumors, trying to detect them when they're much smaller than when they're typically diagnosed. "But we hope to develop a simple blood test to test for pancreatic cancer," he said. "We think that might be refined enough to use in the next 10 years or so."

Currently, he said, pancreatic cancer is the fourth-leading cause of cancer death in the U.S., but researchers project that it will become the third-leading cause this year, behind lung and colon cancers. "Finding a way to detect it in its early stages is especially critical," he said.

Personal vigilance

Another key to catching cancer in its early stages is carefully monitoring your own health.

"If you have any symptoms of illness that after about two weeks aren't going away," Borazanci said, "talk to your doctor. Be an advocate for yourself. The most important thing is awareness."

Christine Nelson agrees. "I was first diagnosed after discovering a mole on my left shoulder," she said. "I encourage everyone who sees something unusual on their skin — whether it's a strange-looking mole or a spot that's bleeding or not healing, for example — to visit a doctor immediately. I tell as many people as I can that early detection is vital."

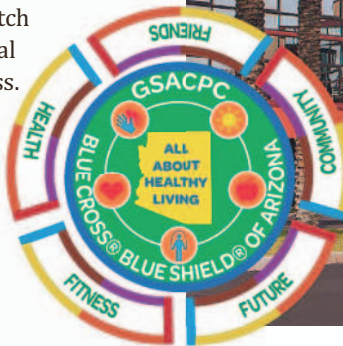
HEALTHCARE BRIEFS

BCBSAZ and Girl Scouts partner for All About Healthy Living patch

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona is working with Girl Scouts Arizona Cactus-Pine Council (GSACPC) to develop a special patch for girls that focuses on healthy living. The 'All About Healthy Living' patch teaches the girls about several important aspects of wellness.

Among other requirements, a Girl Scout will receive the patch when she successfully completes an activity in each of the five wellness categories: Fitness, Friends, Community, Future and Health.

"This collaboration is not only good for our community but offers value for all of our Girl Scouts," said Tamara Woodbury, chief executive officer at GSACPC. "The All About Healthy Living patch will help our Girl Scouts discover, connect and take action around the issue of healthy living. It's an engaging model designed to inspire a



culture of health and wellness for our girls." **MORE INFO:** GirlScoutsAZ.org; AZBlue.com

Abrazo hospitals earn accolades

Abrazo Arrowhead Campus and Abrazo Central Campus have been named as America's Best Hospitals for Patient Safety in 2016 by the Women's Choice Award®.



Abrazo Community Health Network

The two hospitals qualified for the award based on having a low incidence of problems arising from surgical errors and infections. The selection process identifies and ranks hospitals that report their surgical complication and infection frequency to The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Those that have the best overall

performance across the 11 measures, and have above-average female patient recommendations, earned the award.

Abrazo Arrowhead Campus is located at 18701 N. 67th Avenue in Glendale; Abrazo Central Campus is located at 2000 W. Bethany Home Road in Phoenix.

Meanwhile, Abrazo Scottsdale Campus, located at 3929 E. Bell Road in Phoenix, has been recognized as a 'Leader in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Healthcare Equality' by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. It is the only acute-care hospital in Phoenix to receive this designation in 2016.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, the educational arm of the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organization, has worked with healthcare facilities to evaluate and update policies for LGBT patients and their families. Abrazo Scottsdale Campus earned top marks in meeting criteria that demonstrate the hospital's commitment to equitable, inclusive care for LGBT patients and their families. **MORE INFO:** AbrazoHealth.com