

St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

Health Ministry Health Link



1009 Stafford Ave., Fredericksburg, VA, 22401

<http://stmaryfred.org/>

(540) 373-6491

Love One Another

Hello to St. Mary Parishioners and another edition of our Health Ministry Health Link Newsletter. Our goal is to send you articles of interest that are related to a healthy lifestyle, disease and general interest ~ for all members of the family and all ages.

We are now jumping into Spring! Here at St. Mary's we are preparing for such wonderful events as First Communion, Confirmation and many Parish Activities that will keep you Spiritually Happy for the months to come. But let's also look to a Healthy Spring ☺. In this Newsletter we will focus on some articles that address some exercise questions, some information on eye health and how to help overcome anxiety. We also have provided links to articles that talk about life with teenagers!

So, for this newsletter, we will be reading about **How Does a Brisk Two-Mile Walk Compare to a Two-Mile Run on an Elliptical Machine?**, **The Surprisingly Easy Way to Reduce Your Anxiety**, **Switch Focus During Workday**, **Regular Exercise Changes the Brain to Improve Memory, Thinking Skills** and **Stop Aching Feet!**

We have also provided links to articles on the following challenging topics ☺ ~ **Consider Smartphone-Free Bedrooms for Children/Screenagers/Why Do Girls Tend to Have More Anxiety Than Boys?/ The Best Way to Fight with a Teenager**

We hope you enjoy these communications and will let us know what topics are of special interest to you! **Let's Get To It!**

Follow The Cross and Trust in Jesus



Switch Focus During Workday

Sitting hunched over while staring at a computer screen isn't great for your spine or your eyes.

The eyes are not built for what a typical workday looks like, says Dr. Paul Casey, a Las Vegas-based ophthalmologist. Staring for hours at a screen inches away is a huge strain on the eyes.

Looking away from your computer from time to time isn't enough, though. Simply switching your focus, such as looking 20 feet away a few times an hour, can help reduce strain, Casey said.

Think of the muscle movement required to zero in. "Try to focus on something 3 inches from your eye, and you'll feel ... there's real work going on there," he said.

When your focus is farther away, the eyes relax, and the muscles aren't working as hard. When working for extended periods of time at a computer, the ciliary muscle needs to contract to focus, he said.

"That muscle can get cramped, and it can actually become difficult to uncramp it," Casey said.

He recommends what he calls the 20-20-20 exercise.

Every 20 minutes or so, look about 20 feet or more away from your desk, and let your eyes linger for about 20 seconds. Find something that can be a target for your eyes, and that will break the spasm—or even prevent it, Casey said.

"That's long enough to take a break," he said. "You can't just look at your coffee cup—that's not far enough away."

http://www.fredericksburg.com/features/health_living/here-s-how-often-you-should-look-away-from-your/article_86097288-0fff-50be-b3d0-2a421171cad9.html

The Surprisingly Easy Way to Reduce Your Anxiety,

Thank You Very Much

It isn't easy being anxious. You can't sleep, you can't concentrate, you're tired and cranky. The good news: Curbing your anxiety may be easier than you think—perhaps as easy as saying “thank you.”

Anxiety tends to turn people inward, make them more introspective and therefore less socially engaged. Previously, scientists have shown that people who are more self-focused do in fact experience greater levels of anxiety. Two psychologists at the University of British Columbia recently decided to test whether acts of kindness, already shown by researchers to increase a person's happiness, might also help alleviate social anxiety.

In a study published in the *Journal Motivation and Emotion*, Jennifer Trew and Lynn Alden described their study of 115 socially anxious college students. The two researchers divided their subjects into three groups. The first group was asked to engage in three acts of kindness a day, two days a week, over a period of four weeks. Examples of acts of kindness by the participants included washing a roommate's dishes, mowing a neighbor's lawn and donating to charity.

The second group was asked to insert themselves into, or expose themselves to, social situations, also over a four-week span. These situations included asking a stranger for the time, talking with a neighbor, and asking another person to lunch. Subjects were also instructed to do deep-breathing exercises beforehand to make their tasks easier to perform.

The third group, the control, was asked merely to keep a diary of personal events.

The results: The first group, who engaged in acts of kindness, “experienced a greater overall reduction in avoidance goals.” That is, they experienced fewer instances of avoiding social situations because of their fear of rejection or conflict.

Trew and Alden concluded that “acts of kindness may help to strengthen social relationships, increase social engagement, and broaden social networks.”

“We found that any kind act appeared to have the same benefit, even small gestures like opening a door for someone or saying ‘thanks’ to the bus driver,” Alden said in a statement.

Being outwardly directed and engaging in acts of kindness have also been linked to optimism. In another recent study, scientists linked gray matter volume in the left orbitofrontal cortex, the area right behind your left eye, to increased optimism and decreased anxiety. The more gray matter, the more optimistic the person. The more optimistic, the less anxious.

In a study, published in the *Journal Social, Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign looked at the brain anatomy of 61 healthy young adults and then administered a series of psychological tests. By calculating the volume of gray matter in certain brain structures relative to overall brain volume, they discovered that the subjects who were most optimistic and least anxious also exhibited the greatest volume of neurons on the left side of their orbitofrontal cortex.

The hope, said the scientists, is that cognitive therapies can be designed to boost optimism in particularly anxious people, thereby alleviating their emotional distress.

Adapted from: http://www.fredericksburg.com/features/health_living/the-surprisingly-easy-way-to-reduce-your-anxiety-thank-you/article_7527c356-faa3-52d9-a404-9d624d0e34df.html

Stop Aching Feet!

Proper shoes are essential to preventing potential health issues. "If the foot is not properly supported, you can get hip pain, knee pain, shoulder and neck pain. The whole foundation is thrown out of whack," said Andrew Shapiro, DPM, president of the New York State Podiatric Medicine Association.

The American Podiatric Medicine Association identifies these foot ailments as common:

- Blisters. Caused by skin friction. To prevent, keep feet dry. Wash the area and apply antiseptic and bandage if blisters break.
- Bunions. These are misaligned joints in the big toes. They are hereditary, but narrow, tight shoes can exacerbate.
- Corns and Calluses. These are layers of dead skin cells caused by pressure and friction. Never cut corns or calluses.
- Ingrown Nails. These can be caused by shoe pressure, injury, fungal infections, genetics, or improper nail trimming.
- Heel spurs are growths of bone on the underside of the heel bone.

Shapiro shared this shoe-buying advice:

- Follow your instinct as to when it's time to get a new pair. When your feet start to hurt or feel unsupported, head to the store.
- Shop for shoes at the end of the day. Your feet will have swelled by then, and you'll get the most accurate fit. • Athletic shoes are preferred for nurses.
- Clogs should have a strap across the heel to hold the foot in place. Open backed shoes place the foot in a mechanically unsound state.
- Forget the break-in period. The shoes should feel comfortable in the store.
- The shoes should be flexible at the ball of the foot, be constructed of breathable materials, and have plenty of room in the toe boxes.

To keep your feet in tip-top shape, Shapiro suggested:

- Buy multiple pairs and alternate them on different days. This will allow time for the shoe to dry out between uses and prevent athlete's foot and other fungal infections. It will also extend each pair.
- If wearing one pair every day, 3 to 6 months is a reasonable shoe lifespan. This will vary based on the quality of the shoe and the weight and activity level of the wearer.
- Add a cushioned insole, either custom made or over the counter. This will help with being on your feet all day on hard, unforgiving hospital floors.

Shapiro reminds us, "Pain is not normal."

Adapted from: <http://nursing.advanceweb.com/SharedResources/Downloads/2016/030716/Clinician-Handout-Aching-Feet.pdf>

Does a Brisk Two-Mile Walk Compare to a Two-Mile Run on an Elliptical Machine? How Effective is Exercise on an Elliptical Machine as a Weight-Bearing Workout?

Walking and ellipticaling are similar in some respects and quite different in others.

According to a number of recent studies, elliptical training results in greater activation of muscles in the buttocks and thighs than walking does, and less activation of muscles in the calf. Elliptical training also places greater strain on the lower back than walking because of how the muscles fire, a consideration for people with back problems.

It also involves less weight bearing. According to a study in *The British Journal of Sports Medicine*, walking causes 112 percent of someone's body weight to strike the ground with every step, while only 73 percent does in elliptical training. This slighter jarring is an advantage for people with sore joints, but less so for those who hope that exercise will improve bone health.

If, however, you wish to burn calories, walking and elliptical training seem indistinguishable. In an interesting study, college students were asked to complete two 15-minute sessions of exercise, one on a treadmill, the other on an elliptical machine. In both, they were instructed to maintain a pace that felt challenging but sustainable (the equivalent of a 4 or 5 on a 10-point scale of intensity). Throughout, the researchers monitored the volunteers' energy consumption and found that it was the same regardless of which machine they were using. Only the intensity mattered — and you control that measure.

If your brisk walk feels less tiring than a session on the elliptical machine, pick up the pace; or alternatively, dial up or down the resistance on the elliptical machine.

Adapted From: <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/11/ask-well-elliptical-training/>

Regular exercise changes the brain to improve memory, thinking skills

There are plenty of good reasons to be physically active. Big ones include reducing the odds of developing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Maybe you want to lose weight, lower your blood pressure, prevent depression, or just look better. Here's another one, which especially applies to those of us (including me) experiencing the brain fog that comes with age: exercise changes the brain in ways that protect memory and thinking skills.

In a study done at the University of British Columbia, researchers found that regular aerobic exercise, the kind that gets your heart and your sweat glands pumping, appears to boost the size of the hippocampus, the brain area involved in verbal memory and learning. Resistance training, balance and muscle toning exercises did not have the same results. The results were [published this week in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*](#).

The finding comes at a critical time. Researchers say one new case of dementia is detected every four seconds globally. They estimate that by the year 2050, more than 115 million people will have dementia worldwide.

Exercise and the brain

Exercise helps memory and thinking through both direct and indirect means. The benefits of exercise come directly from its ability to reduce insulin resistance, reduce inflammation, and stimulate the release of growth factors—chemicals in the brain that affect the health of brain cells, the growth of new blood vessels in the brain, and even the abundance and survival of new brain cells.

Indirectly, exercise improves mood and sleep, and reduces stress and anxiety. Problems in these areas frequently cause or contribute to cognitive impairment.

Many studies have suggested that the parts of the brain that control thinking and memory (the prefrontal cortex and medial temporal cortex) have greater volume in people who exercise versus people who don't. "Even more exciting is the finding that engaging in a program of regular exercise of moderate intensity over six months or a year is associated with an increase in the volume of selected brain regions," says Dr. Scott McGinnis, a neurologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital and an instructor in neurology at Harvard Medical School.

Put it to the test

So what should you do? Start exercising! We don't know exactly which exercise is best. Almost all of the research has looked at walking, including the latest study. "It's likely that other forms of aerobic exercise that get your heart pumping might yield similar benefits," says Dr. McGinnis.

How much exercise is required? The study participants walked briskly for one hour, twice a week. That's 120 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week. Standard recommendations advise half an hour of moderate physical activity most days of the week, or 150 minutes a week. If that seems daunting, start with a few minutes a day, and increase the amount you exercise by five or 10 minutes every week until you reach your goal.

If you don't want to walk, consider other moderate-intensity exercises, such as swimming, stair climbing, tennis, squash, or dancing. Don't forget that household activities can count as well, such as intense floor mopping, raking leaves, or anything that gets your heart pumping so much that you break out in a light sweat.

Don't have the discipline to do it on your own? Try any or all of these ideas:

- Join a class or work out with a friend who'll hold you accountable.
- Track your progress, which encourages you to reach a goal.
- If you're able, hire a personal trainer. (Paying an expert is good motivation.)

Whatever exercise and motivators you choose, commit to establishing exercise as a habit, almost like taking a prescription medication. After all, they say that exercise is medicine, and that can go on the top of anyone's list of reasons to work out.

Adapted from:

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/regular-exercise-changes-brain-improve-memory-thinking-skills-201404097110>

Links to Additional Articles:

Consider Smartphone-Free Bedrooms for Children

http://www.fredericksburg.com/features/health_living/consider-smartphone-free-bedrooms-for-children/article_e0274147-d9a2-5996-ada2-ee3d09e96d7b.html

Screenagers

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/in-screenagers-what-to-do-about-too-much-screen-time/>

Why Do Girls Tend to Have More Anxiety Than Boys?

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/why-do-girls-have-more-anxiety-than-boys/?module=BlogPost-Title&version=Blog>

The Best Way to Fight with a Teenager

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/the-best-way-to-fight-with-a-teenager/>

All articles/information provided in this Newsletter are not intended to provide personal medical advice. They are intended for general informational purposes only and do not address individual circumstances. Always consult your physician for medical advice and treatment.

A Message from Vera~

I was walking at a normal speed when a trio of bicycles whizzed past me. Then, there were two slow joggers, a walker, and two more cycles. You get the idea ~ lots of exercise effort on a Saturday morning!

We are so aware of the need for physical effort to keep our bodies in shape, even to the point of discomfort, and yet, so often, we excuse ourselves from the daily exercise that keeps our spiritual lives healthy. It is known that even 20 minutes of exercise a day can strengthen the heart. What would at least 20 minutes a day with our Creator do for our spiritual hearts? The secret isn't in just KNOWING what to do but in putting it into practice.

This week, may our spiritual exercise strengthen our witness to the importance of God in our lives.

Blessings, Vera

Iba caminando a velocidad normal, cuando un trío de bicicletas pasaron volando delante de mí. Luego, me pasaron dos corretones lentos, un caminante y dos bicicletas más. Te pinto el cuadro- mucho esfuerzo por hacer ejercicio en la mañana del Sabado! Estamos tan conscientes de la necesidad de ejercicio físico para conservar nuestros cuerpos ágiles, al punto de la incomodidad, y luego, a menudo, nos excusamos nosotros mismos del ejercicio diario que conserva nuestra vida espiritual activa. Es sabido que 20 minutos de ejercicio diario puede fortalecer nuestro corazón. Que lograríamos pasando 20 minutos al día con nuestro Creador, en lo que respecta a nuestra salud espiritual? El secreto esta en no solo SABER que hacer, sino en ponerlo en práctica.

Esta semana, propongamonos ejercitar nuestro espíritu, de tal manera, que seamos testigos de la importancia que Dios tiene en nuestras vidas.

Bendiciones, Vera