

Health & Wellness



INSIDE:

New to the gym? Here's some ways to get started	3
Under pressure: the corrosive effect of hypertension.....	9
Acupuncturists aim to help relieve pain, treat various conditions.....	10
The mental health crisis of moms: what you need to know	11

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New to the gym? Here's some ways to get started

Area gyms help new members 'plug in'

BY THEO DEROSA

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Cynthia Mutch has seen it before. The membership and marketing director for the Frank P. Phillips YMCA in Columbus has seen new members struggle to fit in. Instead of joining an exercise class or orienting themselves with the gym's weight machines, they'll walk on the treadmill alone.

Eventually, they stop coming.

"We always hate that, but it does happen," Mutch said.

It's what she, the YMCA and gyms around the Golden Triangle are aiming to avoid. Through training programs, group classes, posted instructions and more, they hope to take away the intimidation many first-time gymgoers experience.

"There still is that apprehension and self-awareness that is very normal to people who are just first coming in the gym," said Meridith Nuckolls, fitness coordinator at Mississippi State University's Sanderson Center.



Nuckolls

In roughly 15 years as a personal trainer, Nuckolls can be sure. She said clients' No. 1 concern was how to use the equipment; many felt like other gymgoers were watching them, although Nuckolls said that is rarely the case.

It's why Sanderson director Patrik Nordin has done plenty to encourage newcomers. The facility now includes several open, multifunction spaces to allow those working out to have plenty of room around them and perform a variety of exercises.

Created in 2016, personal training studios inside the center — with frosted glass on the outside to prevent others from seeing in — allow a secluded space for one-on-one instruction.

"He wants it to be a place that is for everyone and not just kind of like your gym jocks," Nuckolls said of Nordin. "I think we've done a really good job of utilizing the space that we have."

Mutch touted the YMCA's coffee bar and front sitting area as places for mem-



Linsey Upton works out on the Elliptical at the YMCA in downtown Columbus.

Deanna Robinson/Dispatch Staff

bers to congregate. Before and after fitness classes at the Y, she said, those tables are typically packed with plenty of conversation going on.

Mutch and Nuckolls both said those classes are among the best ways for newcomers to become engaged with a gym. The Sanderson's Bulldog X classes include strength, cardio, yoga, dance and more, while the Y offers several of the same programs plus water classes and programs like Silver Sneakers for active seniors.

Nuckolls said group fitness classes have the highest adherence rates thanks to social connections that develop between members.

"If someone doesn't see you at the class three times, they may reach out and ask,

“There still is that apprehension and self-awareness and self-consciousness that is very normal to people who are just first coming in the gym.”

Meridith Nuckolls

Fitness coordinator at Mississippi State University's Sanderson Center

"How have you been?" she said. "Having that accountability is a great way for people to start."

The Sanderson also offers virtual personal training sessions via FaceTime, Zoom or Webex. Those who sign up are paired with a trainer and can participate in as many 30-minute sessions per week

as needed. They will also receive "homework" in the form of workouts to complete on their own time.

It's "a really good tool to help people feel comfortable before they're coming into this space," Nuckolls said.

The Sanderson has others. Many



Theo DeRosa/Dispatch Staff

The Silver Sneakers class exercises on May 25 at the Frank P. Phillips Memorial YMCA in downtown Columbus. The class, for active seniors, meets Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Gym

Continued from Page 3

equipment machines include diagrams showing users how to operate them; some have QR codes that link to how-to videos. Other QR codes, posted on the walls, link to beginner workouts.

Over in Columbus, the YMCA has its own tools. Members can make an appointment to use the Y's InBody body composition analyzer, which determines what proportion of one's weight is composed of body fat, lean muscle mass and water.

According to InBody's website, the cheapest model costs more than \$6,000.

"We're very blessed to have one here," Mutch said.

But equipment like the body composition analyzer and many exercise machines isn't always intuitive. Nuckolls pointed out "quick start" buttons on cardio machines that allow newcomers to get moving quickly.

At the YMCA, a personal trainer will meet with new members for an orientation, taking them through each piece of equipment and showing them how to use it safely and effectively "so they don't have to learn by watching and can get some professional instruction," Mutch said.

It's just one of the ways the YMCA — and gyms around the area — can cater to new members. That's often a difficult task, but for those who need help adjusting, it's a vital one.

"Getting plugged in and starting to feel like you belong here — like 'this is my place' — that's important," Mutch said.



Theo DeRosa/Dispatch Staff

The dual cable cross machine at the Sanderson Center in Starkville comes with diagrams depicting various ways to use it. The center has several machines with such instructions, and some have QR codes that link to how-to videos.



Theo DeRosa/Dispatch Staff

There are several multifunction spaces inside the Sanderson Center at Mississippi State University. The spaces use an open floor plan and are typically less crowded. "It's less intimidating if you're trying to figure out how to use a piece of equipment, or maybe you're not sure of yourself," fitness coordinator Meridith Nuckolls said.



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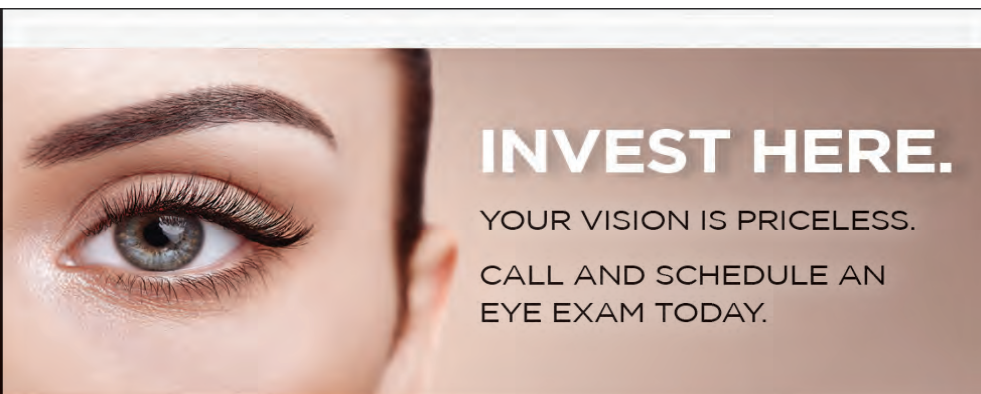
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Under pressure: the corrosive effect of hypertension

Changing habits to be more healthy is not as hard as you think

BY BRIAN JONES

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We've all been there: at a doctor's office, tight band around our arm, a nurse talking in numbers. Confusing, isn't it? What do those numbers even mean? How high is too high?

Interventional cardiologist Dr. Eric McClendon, who is affiliated with Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle, is here to help.

"Most people probably don't know what normal blood pressure is," McClendon said. "You want a (blood pressure) where the first number is less than 120 and the second is less than 80. That's the normal range."

Blood pressure that creeps over that can be dangerous, especially because there are not necessarily any symptoms to make the condition clear. While elevated blood pressure can cause headaches, mild vision or hearing changes, and sometimes a mild tingling in the hands or fingers, it doesn't always.

"You can walk around with an elevated blood pressure for years and never know it," he said. "But all the while it is causing damage to your blood vessels, your heart, your kidneys. Everything. It's too late when you start to notice symptoms."

More concerning symptoms can develop, such as severe headaches and chest pain, he said.

"Severe headaches can be a sign that someone is on the verge of having a stroke, or even having a stroke," he said. "If you go so long and you don't know, you could have a stroke or a heart attack."

Kidney damage can result from high blood pressure, he said.

"High blood pressure is one of the main causes of kidney failure," he said. "People think kidney problems cause back pain, but that's not really the complete story of how you get kidney problems. You could have no problems with urination or anything, but you go to the doctor and they check your lab work and your kidneys are abnormal."

McClendon said one easy way to keep blood pressure down is to avoid salt.

"People should limit their salt intake to about two grams per day," he said. "People may not understand that before they even season food, they already may have the two whole grams for the day. That's true even of just the meat you take out of the package to cook. It's already got (sodium) in it."

Many people are probably getting four grams of salt or more a day, he said.

"That's especially true of fast food," he said. "Fast foods and processed foods have an even higher amount. If you get an order of French fries, they're layered in salt."

Dietary changes don't have to be drastic or "perfect," said Whitney Brown, personal training director at the Fitness Factor.

"Diet monitoring is not as specific as they might think,"



Photo courtesy of Baptist Golden Triangle

Betty Cunningham, RN, infection preventionist at Baptist Golden Triangle, checks the blood pressure of Muriel Burns, RN, a nurse in the hospital's Outpatient Surgery department at the hospital's employee health fair held during National Hospital Week in May 2022. The hospital provides free annual health screenings for its employees, including blood pressure checks, to encourage maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

she said. "They can make simple habit switches like adding something green, a vegetable here and there, it doesn't have to be perfect every time. People think they have to be perfect, but it can be very easy to implement."

A first step could be as simple as taking off one of the buns from your burger, she said.

"Take the top bun off and eat the burger and the fixings and the bottom bun," she said. "Maybe just eat half of your fries, or don't add ranch dressing or salt. If you're really feeling frisky, get a side salad instead of fries."

Exercise is hugely helpful, she said, and also easier than people probably think.

"Get moving, even if it's just a little bit," she said. "A lot of times people think they have to overhaul their exercise, but it can be as simple as taking more steps a day or trying to work in 20 minutes of activity a few times a week. That

makes a huge difference especially if they are relatively sedentary."

Start with a leisure walk, Brown said, and then increase the intensity over time.

"The recommendation is between 7,000 and 10,000 steps on average," she said. "However, if someone is walking a thousand steps a day now, and if they increase it to 2,000 or 3,000 they will still see a lot of health benefits." Strength training is also helpful.

"Just move some weights maybe two times a week," Brown said. "I would recommend hiring a coach just to get them started on something that would be a very simple, total body lift they can do even at home if they're not comfortable coming to a gym."

Exercise and nutrition don't have to be elaborate as long as they are consistent, she said.

Acupuncturists aim to help relieve pain, treat various conditions

BY CAROLINE BEACH
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Just down the road from Mississippi State University, Dr. Jo Anne J. Turner spends her days treating patients out of the small oasis built in the back of her Starkville home.

Turner — an acupuncturist and member of the Diplomate American Board of Medical Acupuncture — has devoted her life to an endless array of needles and energy exchange since 2003.

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine that aims to balance a patient's chi — flow of energy — through pathways in the body called meridians. It is not restricted to but most commonly uses the insertion of thin needles in strategic patterns to unblock the flow of energy and restore balance.

"In a natural way, acupuncture opens up this flow by stimulating different needles in different places in your body," Turner said.

When balancing a client's chi, says Turner, there are two different components: an individual's yin and yang.

"Nothing is ever completely yin and nothing is ever completely yang," she said. "So if you are in an excess state, you are in a yang state. If you are in a deficiency state, you are in a yin state."

Although commonly misunderstood, acupuncture treatment is grounded in researched practice that can provide relief for a wide variety of medical issues including: chronic and acute pain, menstrual cramps, shoulder and back pain, anxiety, allergies, stroke and more, said Claire Mallory O'Nan, owner of Starkville Acupuncture.

There is a wide variety of treatment techniques acupuncture experts use such as acutonics, acupressure, traditional acupuncture and personal evaluations. Therapists say a patient's emotional, spiritual and physical state lead to a highly personalized acupuncture treatment approach.

"I really talk with patients and listen to them," Turner said. "So I'm talking to you, finding out what makes you who you are and what's really going on with your body."

Acupuncture treatment can cost hundreds of dollars depending on the type of treatment and the number of sessions a client schedules. The first session typically at Turner's home lasts three hours.

"I'm just trying to make people better than when they came in," Turner said. "That is my legacy."

O'Nan — like Turner — has dedicated



Caroline Beach/Dispatch Staff

Tuning forks and an ear sculpture sit on the treatment bed inside of Holistic Healing Solutions acupuncture treatment practice. Dr. Jo Anne J. Turner is the owner of Holistic Healing Solutions and uses this room to treat clients.

her life to helping others heal through the curious world of acupuncture. O'Nan, is a licensed acupuncturist who holds a doctorate in oriental medicine.

She found a passion for acupuncture after the treatment helped her quit smoking and has continued her work for the last 20 years.

"I actually quit smoking through acupuncture," O'Nan said. "I was intrigued so I checked it out and ended up studying."

Starkville Acupuncture provides a wide range of treatments, the most notable being a new method of treatment that targets Alpha-gal Allergy. Alpha-gal allergy is carried through ticks that makes anyone infected allergic to any mammalian food products.

"More and more people are getting this in our area because we have so many ticks," O'Nan said. "Western medicine can diagnose it but not treat it and my medicine can treat it."

To treat the Alpha-gal Allergy a tiny 2mm needle is inserted sideways into the ear and stays there for three weeks. Surgical glue is



Photo courtesy of Claire Mallory O'Nan

Clare Mallory O'Nan

put on top of the needle alongside adhesive bandages.

"In my practice, I really focus on complex medical conditions. People that have been to doctor after doctor with strange symptoms that cannot be diagnosed," O'Nan said.

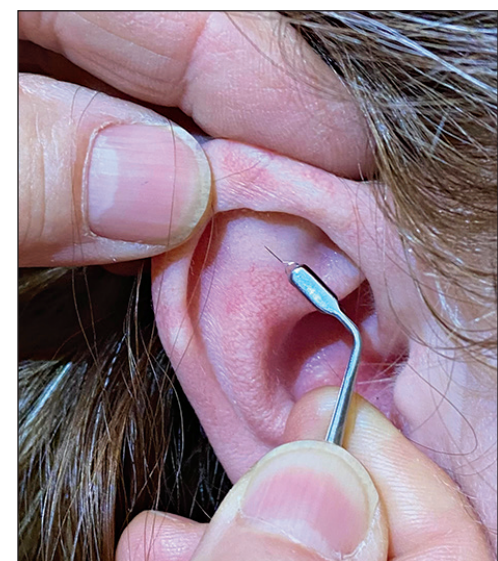


Photo courtesy of Claire Mallory O'Nan

Clare Mallory O'Nan — licensed acupuncturist who holds a doctorate in oriental medicine — holds an acupuncture needle up to a client's ear. O'Nan is in the process of performing ear acupuncture treatment on the client.

The mental health crisis of moms: what you need to know

BY STATEPOINT

A new survey reveals that the mental health of American moms is going largely unattended, with many living under a near-constant state of stress and few seeking support to ease the burden.

The research, commissioned by MDLIVE, an Evernorth company and leading provider of virtual care services in the United States, finds that 33 percent of mothers feel stressed or overwhelmed by their responsibilities as a mom at least five days a week. Drivers of their stress and anxiety may include financial concerns, ripple effects of the pandemic, including the mental health crisis among teens, work responsibilities and being a caregiver simultaneously to both children and aging parents.

Yet, for many moms, the prospect of managing their mental health has become a source of stress in and of itself. For 37 percent of moms, concerns about their own mental health are among their biggest stressors, second only to finances (40 percent).

Possibly even more concerning is that 70 percent of moms admit to holding back their feelings and not telling their partner or family when they're stressed, and 61 percent feel that they have no one to turn to or confide in for help.

"Our research shows that many moms are suffering in silence and not getting the support they need," says Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, who brings more than two decades of direct practice experience to her role as behavioral health medical director at MDLIVE. "I cannot stress enough how important it is for them to prioritize their own well-being."

To help moms manage their mental health, MDLIVE offers the following tips:

1. **Prioritize self-care:** Recognize that practicing self-care is not selfish. In addition to things like eating well, exercising, practicing good hygiene, getting enough sleep, and seeing a health care professional routinely for preventive screenings and other care, self-care also means taking time to pursue hobbies or personal interests that bring you pleasure or fulfillment or offer you a way to relax and unwind – activities you may have abandoned after having kids because it would mean time away from family responsibilities. Practicing self-care puts one in a better position to help care for others because your own well-being is



in check.

2. **Make time to cultivate relationships:** Connecting with people who are important to you is essential to mental health. Make it a priority to spend time with partners, family, friends, colleagues, or anyone else who may be important to you, away from the house and kids, even if it's just for a short period of time.

3. **Seek help when struggling to manage stress and anxiety:** If your emotional state is interfering with your daily life – if you're having difficulty controlling your mood, withdrawing from loved ones, feeling fatigued, having trouble sleeping, lacking motivation, or frequently "zoning out" – it's definitely time to seek professional help.

Acknowledging the importance of mental healthcare, many health plans and employers have expanded the resources available to their members and employers in recent years. New options include digital tools that can help with tracking mood, support meditation, help build life skills, and provide self-care advice. Additionally, telehealth visits with behavioral health professionals offer private, convenient, quality care quickly. For example, MDLIVE's platform makes it easy to search for providers and schedule appointments with one of their psychiatrists or licensed therapists. MDLIVE is a covered benefit for more than 60 million Americans through health insurers such as Cigna, Aetna, certain Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, and many regional and local plans. To learn more or to regis-

ter, visit www.mdlive.com.

"Although it's natural to feel like you need to be a superhero, it takes a toll. You

“Our research shows that many moms are suffering in silence and not getting the support they need. I cannot stress enough how important it is for them to prioritize their own well-being.”

Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos
MDLIVE behavioral health
medical director

should never feel like you're alone in your mental health journey or that you need to suffer in silence," Dr. Espada-Campos.

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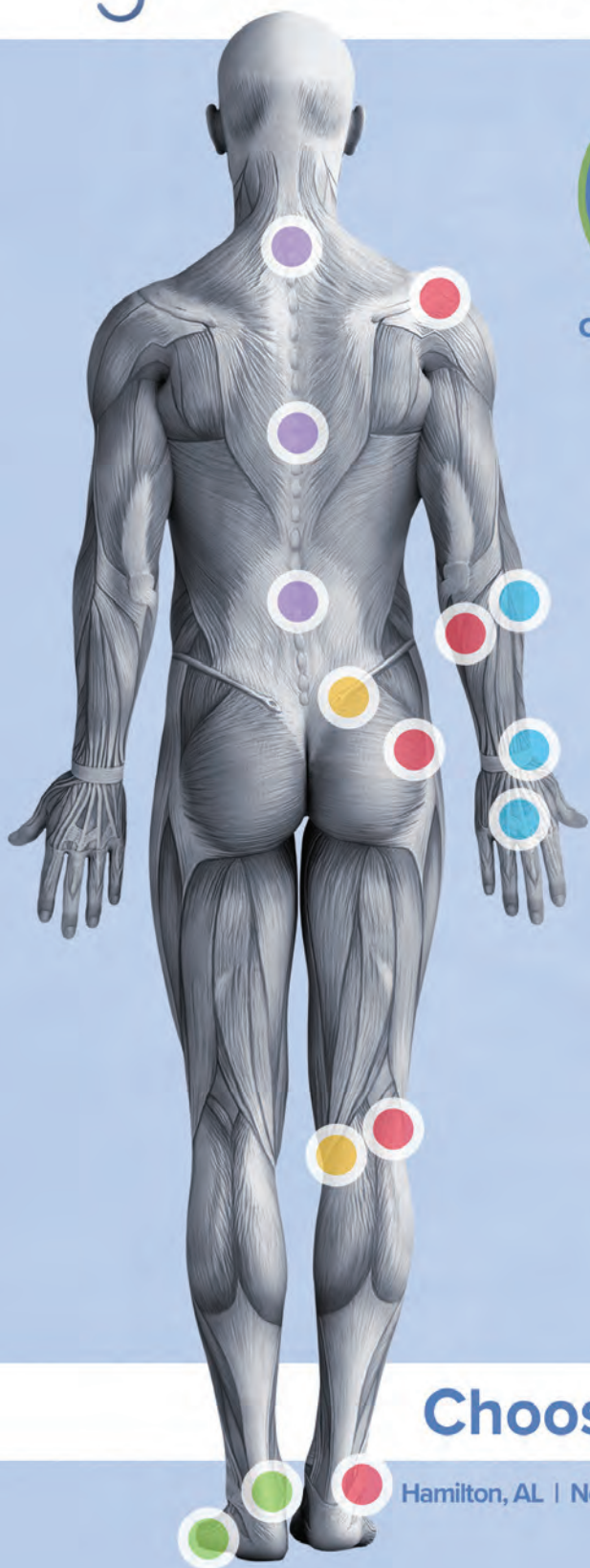
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