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About the cover: Abby Leonard, student at Mississippi State University, walks to start her day on a positive note. Since beginning her walking journey, she has become more active overall and attributes her new-found love for exercise to her walking habit. Photo by Lizzie Tomlin/Dispatch Staff



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Staying on top of your foot health can help prevent, identify other health issues

BY LIZZIE TOMLIN

etomlin@cdspatch.com

Hidden by socks and shoes, “out of sight, out of mind,” often applies to our feet. But feet are one of the most complex and important parts of the human body.

Dr. Scott Jones, orthopedic surgeon for Columbus Orthopedic, specializes in foot and ankle surgery in addition to sports medicine and joint replacement.

He explained that many medical issues create neurological trouble that cause the feet to go numb.

Neurological issues are common in people with diabetes and chronic back pain, Jones said. This is concerning to patients because they can no longer feel through their feet and ankles due to nerve damage, Jones said.

“The most common place to manifest a neurological problem is in the foot,” Jones said.

The most frequent issues associated with foot problems are often ignored by patients or confused with other medical problems. Jones illustrated how the first sign of a foot condition comes with foot pain, which should be addressed by a professional to properly diagnose where the problem stems.

“Patients don’t realize that their arch has dropped or they have pre-diabetic neuropathy, which is combined with other medical issues and creates serious foot problems,” Jones said.

Jones also warns about the possibility of changing alignment in the arch of a patient’s foot, advising them to watch for swelling of tendons and any bony prominence. He encourages people to stop shrugging off foot pain and take their foot health seriously.

“If you’ve got a foot problem that’s not getting better, don’t just assume it’s your shoes,” Jones said. “Please get your foot looked at.”

Even if the problem does start with the foot, ignoring pain and irregularities may cause permanent damage. For example, the Mayo Clinic notes that ignoring frequent arch pain can lead to chronic heel aches that hinder mobility and cause other foot, knee, hip or back complications.



Jones



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It is recommended to do a self-check of your foot health. It’s important to check for points of pain or lack thereof, both of which point to a more serious medical complication.

Foot pain related to the arch is commonly associated with obesity, specific types of exercise, subjective foot mechanics, age and occupations that require being on your feet.

There are home remedies that can help prevent foot issues and manage foot pain without seeing a doctor, such as over the counter pain medication, foot braces and frequently icing the bottom of the foot. However, the Mayo Clinic recommends professional medical treatment if the problems persist for more than two days, if a wound is not healing, if there is consistent numbness, or the foot is unable to provide mobility.

Common summertime activities can often be the culprit for foot health issues. The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) concludes that walking barefoot is one of the leading causes for plantar warts,

athletes foot, injury and infection. APMA recommends wearing shoes, even if going to the beach or pool and avoiding flip-flops other than when they are absolutely necessary due to a lack of arch support.

Courtney Sanders, the office manager at the Columbus Foot Clinic, shared some pointers she’s learned from working closely with these medical issues. She said the clinic encourages several at-home preventative care methods – including regular foot baths, limiting exposure to bacteria and monitoring pain.

“We advise everyone to get a 2-liter bottle, freeze it with water and when you’re finished with your day, roll your feet around on that bottle,” Sanders said. “Then when you’re finished, put that foot up against the wall and stretch it.”



Sanders

Area boasts abundance of walking trails

Walking every day improves heart health

BY LIZZIE TOMLIN

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Birds chirping, soft sunrays and dew still on the grass is how Abby Leonard describes the environment on her daily morning walks.

Every morning, Leonard takes to the walking trails in Starkville with hopes of starting her day on a positive note.

“My days can be stressful, and I need some kind of routine to stick to,” Leonard said. “Walking every morning has completely transformed my overall mood throughout the day. I’ve even lost some weight.”

Much like Leonard, many people have picked up a walking habit ever since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020. In addition to losing weight, the Mayo Clinic found that just a brisk walk a few times a week is enough to improve your immune system, energy levels, mood, cognition and cardiovascular fitness.

Dr. John J. King, cardiologist at

King and Associates in Columbus, recommends walking for 30 minutes at least five times a week to maintain and improve overall health. He explained that walking lowers the heart rate, which extends and improves quality of life.

“Regular walking will lower your resting heart rate, which is a sign of fitness and an independent marker of living longer,” King said.

In addition, King said walking lowers your blood pressure, blood sugar, and reduces your stress levels, which all greatly contribute to heart health. He described the signs of an unhealthy heart and encouraged everyone to look out for them.

“Shortness of breath with exercise –



King

LIST OF TRAILS

Columbus:

- **Lock and Dam:** nature trails, 4214 Lock and Dam Road
- **Lake Lowndes Loop:** 4.5 miles, 3319 Lake Lowndes Road
- **Riverwalk:** 4.4 miles, concrete, College Street and First Street South
- **Plymouth Bluff:** 3.6 miles, nature trails, 2200 Old West Point Road

Starkville:

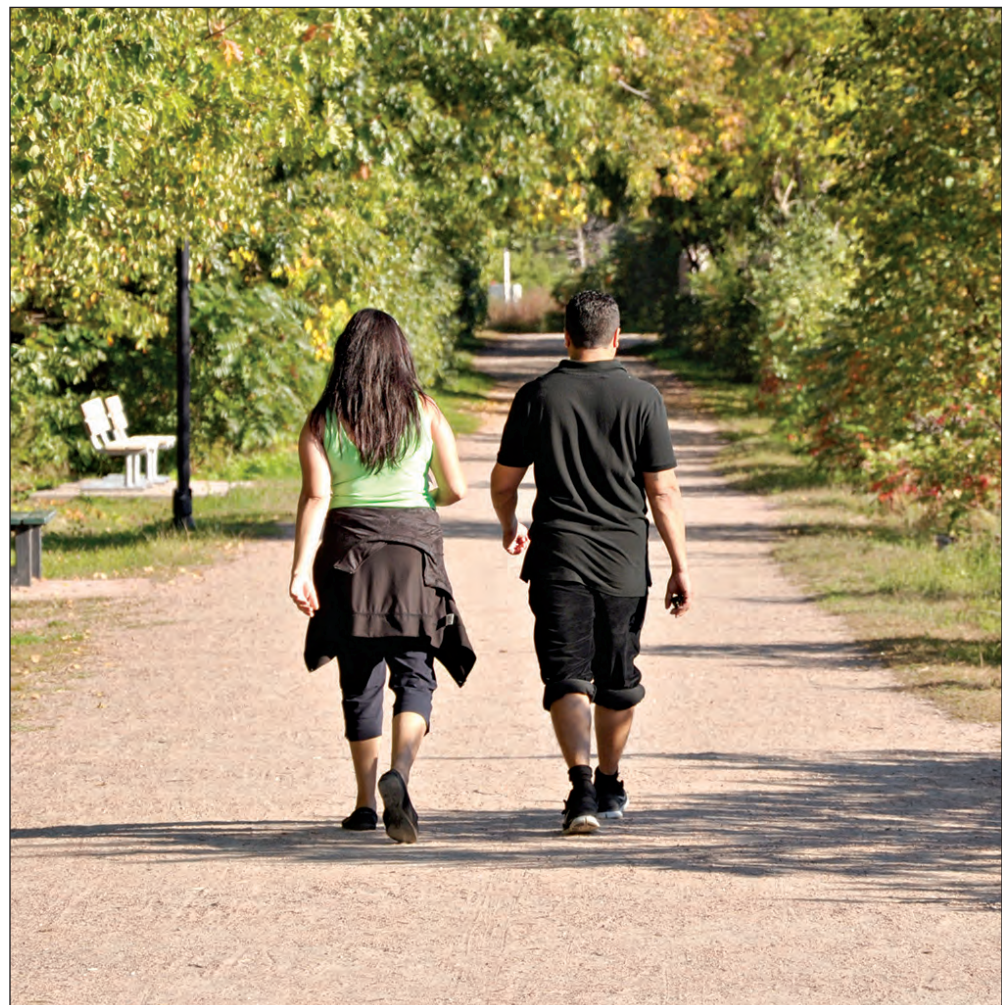
- **Chadwick Lake:** 0.9 miles, paved trail, 225 Coliseum Blvd.
- **Noxubee Wildlife Refuge:** nature Trails, 13723 Bluff Lake Road
- **Lynn Lane:** 1.5 miles, concrete, Mckee Park to South Montgomery
- **J.L. King Park:** paved, 400 N. Long St.
- **MSU Research Park:** 4 miles, gravel, 100 Research Blvd.

not like gym exercise, but going shopping, going up the stairs in a hurry, or taking the trash out – if you’re out of breath from that it’s usually a bad sign, and a lot of times it’s your heart.”

The Mississippi Department of Health reports heart disease and heart attacks make up the largest percentage of deaths in the state. The Heart Foundation reports that walking just 30 minutes a day can decrease the risk of heart disease by 35%, meaning a short morning walk is a gateway to a healthy heart.

Luckily, the Golden Triangle has many options of walking trails suitable for a good stroll. With varying scenery, distances, and difficulty, there is bound to be a trail to fit your needs.

For example, the Columbus Riverwalk is a 4.4-mile trail that bends



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Taking a 30 minute brisk walk a few times a week is good for your overall health.

along the Tombigbee River and includes amazing views of the water. Along the trail you can find a butterfly garden, benches and picnic tables. There is plenty of open space for dogs and kids to run wild.

In Starkville, Chadwick Lake is a mile-long walking track on MSU’s campus that is open to the public. This trail has great views, big fountains, and access to outdoor exercise equipment. Fishing is accessible to trail-goers and pets are always welcome.

A frequent user of the Chadwick Lake walking trail, Brayden Haynes, created a walking club in Starkville called the City Girls Who Walk. They meet one Sunday a month at the

North Farm research park.

“Walking is one of those things that’s accessible to anyone,” Haynes said. “We are available to all ages and body types. We want to build a community between women.”

Haynes recalls many members of her walking group that have had health benefits like losing weight and gaining energy. She said that she walks for her own enjoyment in addition to the benefits she sees in her overall health.

“Walking is an underrated form of exercise,” Haynes said. “It helps with my mental health and mental clarity, I get a lot of joy from it.”

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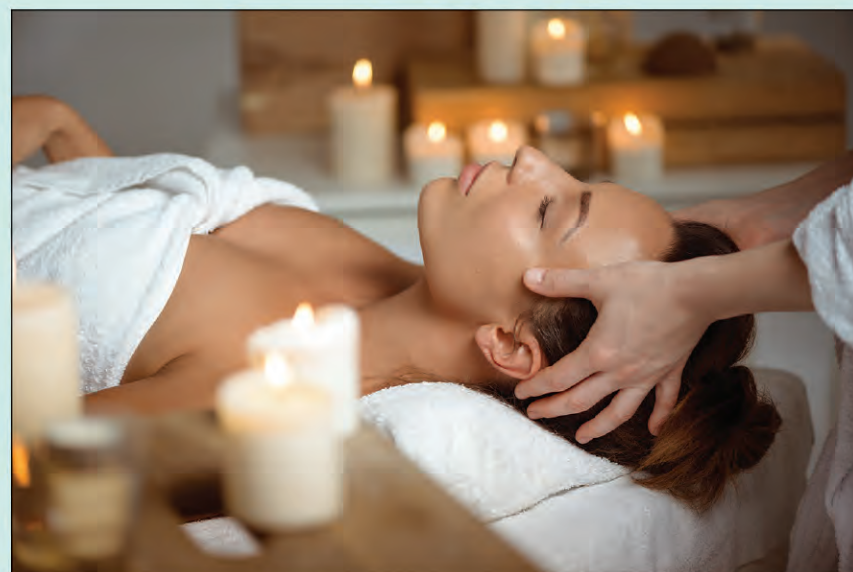
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Adopting pets can lower levels of anxiety, depression

Pets require a routine, socialization; they also don't judge

BY RILEIGH CAMPBELL
rcampbell@cdispatch.com

When Brandy Johnson was a child, she suffered abuse from a relative who also took anger out on animals. She never dreamed that one day she would have the chance to save pets that would also save her.

Johnson, the outreach coordinator for the Columbus-Lowndes Humane Society, has struggled with mental health issues in the past, and adopting pets has been an outlet for her to deal with feelings of depression and anxiety.

She has three dogs of her own: Henry, a Papillon Dachshund mix; Emma, a Yorkie Norfolk Terrier mix; and Jimmy, a Schnauzer Chihuahua mix. Henry started as a foster for Johnson, but he was a perfect fit for adoption.

"He just filled my heart," Johnson said. "At the time I had a senior dog we were about to put down, and Henry helped me mourn the death of my other dog. If I didn't have Henry, I don't think I could have gotten through it so well."

Her other two dogs, Emma and Jimmy, are therapy pets, she said, and Johnson takes them to nursing homes as fill-in therapy dogs when needed.

"When I do have a hard day at work, I am immediately greeted at home by my three pets, and they lift my spirits because I was able to save them," Johnson said.

Dr. Michael Nadorff, an associate professor of psychology at Mississippi State, further explained how adopting pets can help those with depression and anxiety.

"With depression, you are more likely to be less active, and having a

'With depression, you are more likely to be less active, and having a pet will often make it so that you have to increase activity levels ... even if it just forces you out there to get food for your pet.'

Dr. Michael Nadorff
Associate professor of psychology
at Mississippi State

pet will often make it so that you have to increase activity levels ... even if it just forces you out there to get food for your pet," Nadorff said.

Nadorff said pets can also help lower anxiety, even through putting you in situations where you can socialize more easily, such as going to a dog park.

"It can put you in situations where you might not go otherwise," he said.

Quenae Johnson, an adult and children therapist at Counseling Services in Columbus, explained how animals can function as an attachment figure, providing social support that reduces psychological distress.

"Pets are effective because they are non-judgmental beings," she said. "They are able to provide a calm presence, and they help owners establish a routine."

Johnson said there were a total of 169 dogs adopted from CLHS in 2022, and a lot of those customers are first-year college students.

"They normally come in and they are living in an apartment, and they are pretty lonely," she said. "Adopting a pet is normally the first thing they do."

The other group seen a lot at CLHS is older customers, specifically those in nursing homes. CLHS has a program called Dogs on Duty, where dogs are taken to local nursing homes and the



Photo by Rileigh Campbell/Dispatch Staff

Brandy Johnson with two of her dogs, Emma and Jimmy. She adopted Emma, right, from Columbus-Lowndes Humane Society four years ago, and she adopted Jimmy from the Oktibbeha County Humane Society two years ago.

residents can visit with the dogs.

"This gives the dog a mental health break from the shelter, and the resident a mental health break as well," Johnson said. "We have really seen the quality of life of both dogs and humans improve with that program."

For more information about adopting a pet in the Golden Triangle, visit Columbus-Lowndes' website at clhumane-society.org, the West Point-Clay County Animal Shelter at www.wpcas.org or the Oktibbeha County Humane Society at www.ochsms.org.

3 items that can help you elevate your morning routine

STATEPOINT

A great morning routine makes getting out of bed more pleasant and sets the tone for a successful, happy day. Whether you are a morning lark or a night owl, check out these items that can help you start your days on the right foot.

1. The perfect cup of coffee: Most people think they are satisfied with their morning cup of coffee, that is, until they try Nextmug, a smart, self-heating mug that keeps beverages warm (130 degrees F), hot (140 degrees F) or piping hot, (150 degrees F) depending on the setting selected. Lab testing has shown that liquid in a standard ceramic mug loses 52% of its heat over a two-hour period. Nextmug loses no heat over that same time frame, making it possible to savor coffee or tea for as long as it takes to drink it. If you have ever

resorted to microwaving a forgotten morning brew, which can turn even the best drink bitter, or have simply slugged it down tepid, you will appreciate this sleek, ergonomic, easy-to-use mug. Plus, its optional spill-resistant lid means that you can take your cup of joe throughout the home or office, on the back deck, or wherever you would most enjoy it. For more information, visit <https://nextmug.com/>.

2. A closer shave: Men can say goodbye to nicks and patchy facial hair. Offering a close shave, even on a dense beard, Braun's Series 9 Pro Electric Shaver features sensors that adjust power to beard density, and a precision switch to capture tricky hair. Because its built-in sonic technology yields a more efficient shave, and its docking station automatically charges and cleans the razor, you'll be giving yourself the gift of more time for yourself in the morning.

3. Music and podcasts on-the-go: Add entertainment and motivation to morning workouts with comfortable, durable headphones. Just be sure to consider your needs when selecting the right pair. Whereas bone conduction headphones offer the safety of being able to hear surrounding sounds, which is great for morning jogs and commutes, air conduction offers the best shock-free comfort. Finally in-ear style headphones can isolate outside noise when it's desired, such as at the gym. The X9-pro, allows users to switch between these three modes. It's also completely waterproof and Bluetooth-connected, so you can listen to your favorite jams and podcasts, even when swimming laps at the pool. And thanks to its 32G storage, you won't get bored with his listening options.

For brighter, more efficient mornings, find gear that elevates your routine.

Prioritizing your health now that the public health emergency is over

It's time to address challenges that have been neglected — or created by — the pandemic

STATEPOINT

With the national COVID-19 Public Health Emergency officially over, medical experts say it's time to address the health challenges that may have been neglected during — or created by — the pandemic.

"Making time for you and your family's preventive medical care and investing in your mental health is essential right now," says Jack Resneck Jr, MD, president of the American Medical Association (AMA). "As you settle into old routines or find new ones, you may be feeling overwhelmed, anxious, afraid or depressed. Give yourself permission to express these emotions, while taking steps to get needed care."

For better health and wellness, the AMA offers these tips:

1. Stay connected: According to the U.S. Surgeon General, the health consequences of isolation include a 29%

increased risk of heart disease, a 32% increased risk of stroke, and a 50% increased risk of developing dementia for older adults. Spending time with loved ones, friends or community groups can quickly have a positive impact on mental and physical health.

2. Practice self-care: Getting regular exercise, practicing gratitude and getting enough sleep are all forms of self-care that can improve mental health. Check out the National Institute of Mental Health's resources, which include ideas for better understanding what causes your symptoms and what coping techniques might help you manage your mental health.

3. Know the signs: Feelings of hopelessness or irritability, loss of interest in hobbies and activities, and decreased energy or appetite can all be signs of depression. If you are experiencing signs of a mental health condition, speak to your primary care physician or a psychiatrist. Be aware of the 988 Suicide &

Crisis Lifeline, a national hotline available 24/7. Anyone experiencing a suicidal, substance use or mental health crisis can call or text 988 to speak to trained crisis counselors.

4. Get screened: It's estimated that since April 2020, 3.9 million breast cancer, 3.8 million colorectal cancer and 1.6 million prostate cancer diagnoses may have been missed due to pandemic-related care disruptions. If you're due for preventive care, tests or screenings, make an appointment.

5. Don't wait: An estimated 41% of adults with one or more chronic health conditions reported delaying or forgoing health care since the pandemic started. Additionally, one in three of those adults reported that doing so worsened one or more of their health conditions or limited their ability to work or perform other daily activities. Whether you have a chronic health condition or not, don't wait until something is wrong before seeing a doctor. If something does feel off, schedule an appointment as soon as possible.

6. Get vaccinated: Adolescents and adult immunizations sharply declined during the pandemic and an estimated

26 million recommended vaccinations were missed in 2020 as compared to 2019. Make sure your family is up-to-date on vaccines, including the annual influenza vaccine and the bivalent COVID-19 vaccine for everyone 6 months and older. Your doctor can let you know if you're due for a COVID booster. If you have questions, consult your physician and trusted resources, including getvaccineanswers.org.

7. Know your numbers: Track health data such as height, weight, body mass index and blood pressure in order to share trends with your doctor and take action if needed. Visit ManageYourBP.org to understand what your blood pressure numbers mean and how to get your blood pressure under control. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, affects millions of Americans and can increase heart attack and stroke risk.

For more tips and information, visit <http://www.ama-assn.org>.

"It's vitally important to prioritize mental and physical health. Contact your health care professional to schedule the care you need to keep you and your family healthy," says Dr. Resneck.

Donate plasma to save lives this summer

STATEPOINT

Plasma donation is an impactful, meaningful way to give back to your community this summer. By donating plasma, you can help people like Mabelle Pecoraro.

Pecoraro lives with Hereditary Angioedema (HAE), a rare disease that can cause attacks of swelling, and often pain, in specific parts of the body, including the stomach, hands, feet, arms, legs, genitals, throat and face. Like with many serious and rare diseases, the therapies used to treat HAE require human plasma donations.

Donors' impact

"Plasma donors directly impact my ability to live a full and productive life. Therapies made from these donations allow me and my son, who also lives with HAE, to receive ongoing treatment

for our conditions," says Pecoraro.

Plasma, a straw-colored liquid that carries red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, helps to maintain a steady level of blood pressure, supports the immune system and delivers critical nutrients to cells.

Plasma donations are used to replace crucial proteins people living with rare and serious diseases lack, and to produce therapies that treat diseases such as primary immune deficiencies, hereditary angioedema, hemophilia, Alpha-1 Antitrypsin deficiency and various bleeding and neurological disorders.

There is a critical and ongoing need for plasma donations, as these life-saving medicines treat people in more than 100 countries around the world. Every year, it takes more than 1,200 plasma donations to treat one hemophilia patient, more than 900 plasma donations to treat one alpha-1 patient and more

than 130 plasma donations to treat one primary immune deficiency patient.

"Plasma donors do the amazing, as plasma is used to develop life-saving therapies for people living with rare and serious diseases. We encourage those who can donate to visit a nearby CSL Plasma donation center," says Rachpal Malhotra, MD, head of plasma donor safety, CSL Plasma.

Eligible, qualified plasma donors also receive payments in connection with donating plasma.

The donation process

To donate, you must be in good health, between the ages of 18-74, weigh at least 110 pounds, and have had no tattoos or piercings within the last four months. You must also meet the health and screening requirements and have valid identification with a permanent address.

Although wait times may vary at each location, the collection process takes approximately 90 minutes after the first donation.

It is recommended that you drink four to six 8-ounce glasses of water, fruit juice or other caffeine-free liquid at least two to three hours before donation, avoid caffeinated beverages, avoid alcohol of any type for 24 hours beforehand, eat a meal prior to donation and get adequate sleep.

CSL Plasma has 320 plasma donation centers across the United States.

Visit cslplasma.com for more information and to find a center near you. The CSL Plasma donor app is also available for Apple and Android device users.

"I thank all donors and encourage anyone who is considering donating to remember that doing so does make an impact for people like me and my son," says Pecoraro.



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