

Health & Wellness



Healthy screen time

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'Are (screens) going to control us, or are we going to control them?'

Helping your kids find a healthier balance for their screen time

BY EMMA HARDY | ehardy@cdispatch.com

With the common availability and the relationship the modern world has with technology, screen time is becoming a major factor in everyone's life.

Cameron Douglas, a supervisor at the Clinic for Outreach and Personal Enrichment (COPE) at the University of Mississippi, said children are spending more time online, especially since the impact of COVID-19. He said that classroom behavior has gotten worse and social skills are decreasing.

"Some people have just gotten used to being on technology because of the pandemic. ... It's just a new normal that became the new standard," Douglas said.

Common Sense Media says children under the age of 2 spend almost 50 minutes a day interacting with a screen, 2- to 4-year-olds old spend 2 1/2 hours a day with a screen. For 5- to 8-year-olds, it's about three hours a day.

Dr. Katerina Sergi, an assistant research professor at Mississippi State University studying how technology impacts society and education, said the availability of technology makes it more common for families to entertain their children with a screen.

"All these devices are here to stay. The usage is not going to decrease, but as educators, as psychologists, as child developers we try to see what's the perfect balance, more so or less," Sergi said.

Douglas said too much screen time can result in lack of sleep, quickly deteriorating eyes, weight gain due to less physical activity, decreased attention span and a lack of social interaction.

"It actually ties into mental health because we're social creatures, and if we don't get that social interaction we'll be more prone to aggression, depression, anxiety, so on," Douglas said.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children younger than 18 to 24 months should avoid screens completely unless video chatting with family.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry recommends ages 2 to 5 years only engage in an amount of one hour of non-educational screen time on weekdays and three hours on the weekend.

For ages 6 and older a healthy balance is encouraged. Douglas said the content people consume has a



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'It actually ties into mental health because we're social creatures, and if we don't get that social interaction we'll be more prone to aggression, depression, anxiety, so on.'

Cameron Douglas, Clinic for Outreach and Personal Enrichment (COPE) at the University of Mississippi

great impact on their outlooks on life. He said technology and social media can have positives such as connecting with different communities, but he said if people do not know how to properly navigate social media, they could end up experiencing a lot of anxiety from the information they see.

Douglas said people should start with being mindful of the time they allocate to their screens by using scheduling apps or regular schedules to plan the time

spent on portable devices and to add structure to the activity.

Dr. Traci Hayes, an assistant professor at the University of Southern Mississippi with a concentration in Public Health, said encouraging children to interact in other activities outside screen time is another good strategy for healthy screen usage. She also said it's always a good idea for parents to model the behavior they want to see in their children. This means setting healthy habits into place for everyone in a household, such as no phones an hour before bed or during meal time.

Sergi said co-viewing, the practice of a caretaker taking part in screen time with a young child to monitor the activity, is an effective strategy for young children. She also suggested instituting parental controls on devices as well to protect children. She said it's always best to consult a professional and to understand the balance and goal of technology.

"Are (screens) going to control us, or are we going to control them?" asked Sergi. "That's the bottom line in the end."

Find accountability, community with group fitness classes

Exercising with a group decreases stress, improves overall well-being

By Emma McRae | emcrae@cdispatch.com

Making that 8 a.m. workout may be easier for some than others. With group fitness classes, built-in accountability partners ensure you'll never miss the early workout without notice again.

A friend's reminder can make all the difference, Marketing and Membership Director for the Frank P. Phillips Memorial YMCA Cynthia Mutch said.

"Once you've been coming for a while, you'll get a text that says, 'Where were you this morning?'" she said. "So it kind of motivates you to get up here and get your workout done."

Combining socializing with exercising, group fitness classes are a powerful way to enhance overall well-being. A 2017 study published in the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association found that regular participation in group fitness classes led to a significant decrease in perceived stress and an increase in physical, mental and emotional quality of life.

Group classes are a great way to meet others with similar fitness goals who can also hold you accountable, Mutch said.

"Probably the main benefit is that there is a community in the room," she said. "So when someone walks in, they are more than likely going to find people in the room that are like-minded. (People) who are looking for a way to exercise, but may find that it's also a socializing thing as well."

Mutch said classes are a great way to get plugged in when starting a gym membership. With a large variety of classes to choose from, there's something for everyone, she said.

The Y in Downtown Columbus offers more than 40 classes to members, ranging from Yoga for Guys and Powerhouse Dance to Water Aerobics. The most popular class, Silver Sneakers, is specially designed for active older adults, Mutch said.

"We will sometimes have the room full of active older adults," she said. "The class uses a chair for part of the class (and) some small hand weights. They don't get all the way down on the floor ever, so that's one of the ways the class is modified for older adults."

Another class, Rock Steady Boxing, is specifically for individuals struggling with Parkinson's Disease. The repetitive right-left movement helps improve



Emma McRae/Dispatch Staff

Frank P. Phillips Memorial YMCA Instructor Sandra Murray leads the Silver Sneakers group fitness class in an exercise. The class, adapted for active older adults, is one of the many group classes held at the Downtown Columbus YMCA on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Parkinson's symptoms, Mutch said.

At the Mississippi University for Women's Stark Recreation Center, group fitness classes offerings change each semester. Director of Facilities Operations and Intramurals Glen Halbert said classes being held this summer include gentle yoga, pound, zumba, Barre yoga and martial arts.

"Whenever the semester starts, we've been known to have classes like Hip Hop Line Dancing, Cycling and different kinds of dance classes," he said. "Just really whatever our customer base wants to see."

Halbert said participating in group classes helps foster a sense of belonging at the gym, especially when working out with others at similar experience levels.

"It's being part of a tribe," he said. "People come in and realize that people are on their level and not nec-

essarily super advanced. Everybody's trying to grow. (Instructors) meet all the participants where they're at, so nobody feels alienated."

Group classes can also help new members find support when starting a new fitness routine, Halbert said.

"I definitely think it's a good option for people starting out because you are so well coached when it comes down to the instructors that we have," he said. "You may think that workout is not for you, but they will tell you different ways to modify it."

When starting a new group class, Mutch said it's important to keep an open mind.

"Find something that looks appealing," she said. "Go in there and just try it. If it's not really your cup of tea, try another one. Find one that you feel like you can plug in and go continuously."



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5 Things to know about asthma and summer heat

Excessive heat and humidity increase the risk of asthma exacerbations, asthma-related hospitalization and asthma-related death

STATEPOINT MEDIA

Nearly 25 million people of all ages in the United States are living with asthma, a lifelong chronic disease that makes it harder to move air in and out of the lungs.

Here's what the American Lung Association wants everyone to know during summer, when extreme heat can make asthma harder to manage.

1. New challenges are emerging.

Beyond traditional asthma triggers like respiratory infections, secondhand smoke and pets, new challenges are emerging. The effects of climate change include extreme heat, poor air quality, increased allergens, extreme weather events, and more frequent and intense wildfires, all of which are making asthma more difficult to manage.

Excessive heat and humidity increase the risk of asthma exacerbations, asthma-related hospitalization



iStock via Getty Images

and asthma-related death, especially for children and women. Patients should limit time outdoors during heat waves, seek access to air conditioning and take steps to improve indoor air quality, as humidity allows dust mites and mold to thrive.

2. City dwellers are particularly vulnerable.

Two-thirds of the average U.S. city is made up of roads, parking spaces, sidewalks and roofs. Since these surfaces are typically dark and non-porous, they contribute to flooding, increased air pollution, poor health and what is known as "urban heat," a phenomenon in which cities experience warmer temperatures

than surrounding areas. Urban heat, combined with pollutants from power plants, motor vehicles and other pollution sources, creates ozone pollution, also known as smog. Those with asthma can experience symptoms like shortness of breath, wheezing and coughing from both ground-level ozone and particle pollution, as well as from the impacts of extreme weather and airborne allergens.

Sadly, these issues disproportionately impact certain communities. Due to a history of discriminatory practices like systematic denial of mortgages, insurance loans, and other financial services on the basis of race and ethnicity, Black and Indigenous people, and other people of color, are more likely to be living in areas impacted by urban heat and poor air quality.

3. Flooding can harm lung health.

Increased severe storms due to climate change results in more flooding, which can harm lung health. Chemicals, sewage, oil, gas and other dangerous substances found in floodwaters can pose health risks, and mold, associated with asthma attacks, can grow anywhere there is water or dampness.

4. Advocacy efforts are underway.

The Smart Surfaces Coalition is made up of 40 national and international organizations committed to making Smart Surfaces the global urban design stan-

See *ASTHMA*, 8



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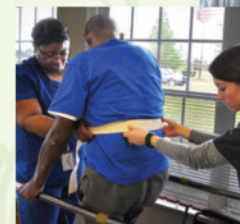
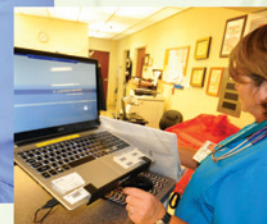
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Asthma

Continued from Page 7

ard. Smart Surfaces encompass a suite of cutting-edge technologies, including reflective (cool) roofs and pavements, green roofs, trees, solar panels and rain gardens. Designed to mitigate urban heat, enhance air quality and improve health, these transformative urban features can cool cities by 5 degrees F, reduce flooding, provide economic benefits and potentially advance environmental justice.

The American Lung Association, an active member of the Smart Surfaces Coalition, encourages cities to take these actions:

- Install light-colored roads, parking lots and driveways to reflect sunlight and reduce heat.
- Install solar panels to convert sunlight into electricity and provide shade for roofs.
- Plant trees to increase shade.
- Select porous surfaces to collect polluted stormwater, soak it into the ground, and filter out pollution.

Other strategies to reduce urban heat, air pollution and ozone levels

include using public transportation carpooling, increasing green spaces and installing cooling centers in extreme conditions.

5. Resources are available.

Educational programming can help people better manage the disease in summer and year-round. Patients can check out the self-management education programs, information and tools available at Lung.org/asthma or call the American Lung Association's Lung Helpline at 1-800-LUNGUSA. Living with an illness, or being the caretaker to someone who is, can take a physical and emotional toll. Patients can get support and knowledge, and connect with others by joining the Lung Association's Patient & Caregiver Network.

For the 24.8 million Americans living with asthma, extreme summer temperatures and emerging environmental threats can make life more difficult. Fortunately, new educational resources and expanded programming can help patients navigate new and old challenges alike.



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Weight-loss drugs show promising results, unintended consequences

High costs make it out of reach for some, while 'vanity' use sucks up supply

BY ZACK PLAIR | zplair@cdispatch.com

Wegovy. Saxenda. Zepbound. These are some of the newest drugs on the weight-loss block, but they've actually been around for a while.

You may know them better as the Type II diabetes medications Ozempic, Victoza and Mounjaro.

Glucagon-like peptide-1, or GLP-1, medications enhance insulin production and suppress glucagon in diabetics. But when clinical trials showed how much weight patients were losing on those medications, it created a spinoff industry focused solely on helping people shed pounds, said Dr. William Rosenblatt, an internist with Golden Triangle Internal Medicine and Pediatrics in Columbus.



Rosenblatt

Now, several GLP-1s have FDA approval for weight loss. While the formulas in each of the weight loss drugs are the same as their Type II diabetes treating counterpart, Rosenblatt said patients are often prescribed higher doses of the weight-loss version and take them for shorter intervals – usually one to two years.

"So far, they appear to be pretty safe," Rosenblatt said, noting he is comfortable prescribing them to patients who suffer from obesity. "... When you look at the spectrum of what medicines we have at our disposal to help treat obesity, these medications quickly emerge as the most profound treatment options short of bariatric surgery. ... (They are) highly effective and have been a game changer in a lot of my patients' lives."

Rosenblatt explained the medicines



Zack Plair/Dispatch Staff

Shown are three boxes of the Wegovy weight-loss drug Wednesday at an area pharmacy. The FDA in recent years has approved drugs used to treat Type II diabetes to specifically treat weight loss, giving each version a different trade name. For example, Wegovy is the same drug as Ozempic.

magnify the signal from your gut to your brain that you are full, meaning your appetite is satisfied sooner than it used to be. That allows patients to restrict their calories without feeling like they're starving themselves, he said.

Most of the drugs available are administered through a weekly injection. The most common side effect, he said, is nausea, especially right after patients start the medicine.

Results in clinical tests, and in Rosenblatt's practice, have consistently shown 15-to-30% excess weight loss over the course of the regimen, though some may only show 5-to-10%.

"I've found a lot of people are learning significant dietary changes and are able to institute lifestyle changes that they wouldn't have been able to otherwise," he said. "A lot of that does stick, even when we ... get folks off the medicine."

That's not universal. In fact, Rosenblatt said, without lifestyle modifications, the weight can come back after patients stop using the drug.

GLP-1 versus surgery

Insurance companies have been slow to cover GLP-1s for weight loss as the primary indicator, meaning patients might fork out \$800 to \$1,200 a month for the drug – \$9,600 to \$14,400 per year.

"That's a huge issue," Rosenblatt said. "... Right now, it's unaffordable for the

vast majority of people who need it."

At that price, Dr. Brad Beckham said, bariatric surgery is the cheaper long-term option and has permanent results – though the surgeon at Baptist Golden Triangle General and Vascular Surgery admits he is biased.



Beckham

When patients take a GLP-1, he said, their fat cells shrink, but multiply.

"So when you come off the medication, you've got more fat cells that are now hungry," Beckham said.

By comparison, the sleeve gastrectomy his clinic performs reduces the size of the stomach by 80% and commonly drops excess weight by 50% over two years, he said. It's an overnight stay at the hospital and safer than a procedure like gastric bypass because it doesn't rearrange the small intestine.

Costs can range from \$2,000 with insurance to \$15,000 without. To qualify, a patient's BMI must be 40 or more, or the patient must have a BMI of at least 35 and another obesity-related diagnosis (like hypertension or diabetes).

"Dollar for dollar, weight loss surgery is actually much cheaper than the drugs," Beckham said.

There's still a place for the GLP-1 drugs, Beckham believes. They can help obese patients who aren't good candidates for surgery, help patients too heavy to have the surgery drop weight

so they can or boost results for patients' whose surgeries did not render the desired results.

No matter what, lifestyle changes – like a sustained proper diet and exercise – must be part of the regimen for the drugs or the procedure to pay off long-term.

"None of these are magic bullets that can do the work all by themselves," Beckham said.

Vanity industry

Both Rosenblatt and Beckham agree the "vanity industry" is stealing supply of GLP-1s from both the diabetic and weight-loss patients.

"If a patient who has a BMI of 45 or 50 is using these medications and they don't have diabetes, I consider that a huge win because we are preventing the development of their future diabetes," Rosenblatt said. "Abuse is happening at the vanity level where you've got folks who weigh 130 pounds and want to be 115 again like they were in high school. ... That's the cottage cash industry ... where there's significant harm being done to others who need these drugs more."

Where diabetics are concerned, they are sometimes finding pharmacies don't have their medicines. Doses for those patients are ratcheted up at intervals, Rosenblatt said, so if they can't get their medicine for long enough, they have to start over at the smallest dose.

"That's a real scenario that has played out in my clinic once every couple of weeks," he said.

Not only should production ramp up for GLP-1s, Rosenblatt said, there need to be better guardrails that regulate "vanity" users.

"Should we be in a society where you can go online when you weigh 125 pounds and order (these medications) from a virtual doctor if you have enough cash?" Rosenblatt asked. "Because here we are. ... Do we want that to continue unchecked?"

Why men should talk about their health

A Cleveland Clinic survey found that only 3 out of 5 men get annual physicals and 55% do not get regular health screenings

STATEPOINT MEDIA

American men may be neglecting their health and wellness, particularly when it comes to their urological health. But an open line of communication between men and their health-care providers, and among family members, can lead to better care.

A Cleveland Clinic survey found that only 3 out of 5 men get annual physicals and 55% do not get regular health screenings. What's more, many men shy away from the subject of their health, with 77% reporting that they don't know their complete family history when it comes to urological issues.

"There is a clear need to fill care gaps and destigmatize men's health issues," says Shaun Noorian, CEO and founder of Empower Pharmacy, a compounding pharmacy that supports patients with men's health concerns such as testosterone, sexual wellness, prostate health and gynecomastia.

Fortunately, innovations in the health care industry that are expanding access to tailored care are helping fill these gaps and helping health care providers support their patients' needs more effectively.

Noorian's own story shows how a compounding pharmacy helped him optimize his health. His doctor recommended compounded medications after a health and wellness check of his hormones. The compounded medications provided the

exact dosage and strength prescription he needed, which can't always be found through traditional medicines. But compounding goes beyond hormones. Noorian discovered it could also address various men's health concerns like testosterone, sexual wellness, urology and dermatology.

Noorian says that men can use these tips for a happy, healthier life:

- Don't wait until you have a serious medical condition to see your doctor. Schedule annual physicals and all recommended health care screenings.

- Destigmatize men's health issues by talking to male family members about prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths for men in the United States and a man is two to three times more likely to get prostate cancer if his father, brother or son had it. You should also talk to your primary care doctor or urologist about having a blood test and examination, particularly if you have a family history of the disease.

- Erectile dysfunction affects nearly 30 million men of all ages across the United States, according to the Indiana University School of Medicine, which notes that it could be the sign of another underlying health issue. Your urologist can help rule out causes, like heart disease and high blood pressure.

- When dealing with men's health issues, talk to your healthcare provider about all available treatment options, including the potential bene-

How compounding pharmacies can help patients get needed care

STATEPOINT MEDIA

Most consumers know how a traditional pharmacy works. Far fewer are aware of an alternative option: a compounding pharmacy. Here's everything you need to know about these specialized healthcare facilities, and how they have the potential to improve your wellness.

What is a compounding pharmacy? A compounding pharmacy employs the art and science of creating personalized medications based on a patient's specific requirements, ensuring an individualized approach to healthcare.

"The conventional, mass-produced, one-size-fits-all approach to medication unfortunately does not work for all patients. Compounded medications however can help ensure patients get the therapies they need safely," says Shaun Noorian, CEO and founder of Empower Pharmacy, a compounding pharmacy that specializes in men's health, women's health, dermatology, hormone replacement, weight management, IV therapy, longevity, sexual wellness, mental health and gender affirming care.

Why is this important? Compounded medications are crafted to address individual requirements, such as allergies to certain ingredients, dosage adjustments, or the need for alternative forms of medication (for example, needing a liquid instead of a pill form). In short, compounded medications deliver therapy required for individuals to live healthier, happier lives in a form that can optimize their care. These medications can also play a vital role in addressing challenges related to FDA-approved prescription medication

shortages.

How common are compound pharmacies? Compounding pharmacies make up 2% of the current pharmaceutical market, but that figure is growing as more patients and providers grasp the benefits that compounded medicines provide.

How does this change the role of the pharmacist? Pharmacists have always been an important part of patients' care teams, dispensing medications and offering advice on side effects and dosing. At a compounding pharmacy, that role also includes producing customized prescription drugs for patients, most often from raw ingredients.

Are compounding pharmacies within reach for regular patients? Some compounding pharmacies are working to prioritize access. Empower Pharmacy, for example, provides medications at an affordable cost in an effort to ensure everyone has access to the treatments they need. And because the pharmacy operates online, patients with mobility and transportation issues are able to fill their prescriptions from the comfort of home.

Are there any safety issues to be aware of? Compounded medications are not FDA-approved, making it important for patients to stick to trustworthy pharmacies that use safe compounding practices. Be sure your pharmacy has Pharmacy Compounding Accreditation Board (PCAB) accreditation.

To learn more, visit empowerpharmacy.com.

"We believe that understanding the nuances of compounding, its benefits, and its role during FDA-approved shortages helps equip patients to make informed decisions about their healthcare," says Noorian.

fits of using a compounding pharmacy. Compounded medicine enables healthcare providers to prescribe treatments that are specifically tailored to individual biomarkers (biological molecules found in body fluids or tissues that are a sign of a condition or disease) by dosage and formulation. By

analyzing biomarker data, compounded medications can be formulated with precise dosages and combinations of more than one active pharmaceutical ingredient, optimizing therapeutic outcomes for a wide range of health conditions.

To learn more about how

compounding pharmacies can support men's health, visit empowerpharmacy.com.

"For the best care possible, men should be proactive about their health, and providers should explore with their patients all available treatment options, including personalized solutions," says Noorian.



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