Welcome to HEALTHYROADS!
In this monthly newsletter, you’ll find a collection of articles on popular health and wellness topics. If you’d like additional support in your quest to lose weight, improve nutrition, develop an exercise plan, reduce stress, or quit smoking, visit us online at www.healthyroads.com. There you can find a collection of articles, tips, tools, and trackers to help you reach your health goals.

Wellness and Healthy Living
Hepatitis C

There’s a special day in the month of May. Yes, there’s Mother’s Day and Memorial Day. But National Hepatitis Testing Day is on the May calendar, too. It’s not a “day off from work” kind of day. But it’s important in its own way, especially for those born between 1945 and 1965. People born during these years are the baby boomers. Statistics show that people in this age group are 5 times more likely to have Hepatitis C than other adults.

Hepatitis C is a liver disease that’s caused by a virus. Unlike the flu virus, the Hepatitis C virus tends to cause few symptoms. You can have it for decades without even knowing it. The problem is that once you have it, Hepatitis C can result in serious liver problems over time. In fact, most people who have the virus but don’t get treated end up with a liver disease. One such disease is cirrhosis, an often fatal disease that harms liver function. Another serious disease that can result is liver cancer.

You can only get Hepatitis C by coming in contact with infected blood. People who share drug needles are at high risk. But you don’t have to have a drug problem to have Hepatitis C. Even if you experimented just once in the past, you’re at risk. You’re also at risk if you received a blood transfusion before 1992. That’s because donated blood wasn’t screened for Hepatitis C before then.

Here are some other less common but possible ways you can get Hepatitis C:

- Sharing razors or toothbrushes with someone who has Hepatitis C
- Having sexual contact with someone who has Hepatitis C
- Getting a tattoo or having your body pierced with unclean tools
- Getting a manicure or pedicure with unclean tools

Even if you think you’re in the clear, take a test to be sure. Many people with Hepatitis C don’t know how or when they got it. Pinpointing the source is hard because Hepatitis C wasn’t confirmed until 1989. As a result, some experts think it’s possible that even routine medical treatments may have spread the disease in some cases.

There is a silver lining, though. The latest treatments are 70 percent effective in clearing the virus from the body. What’s more, treating Hepatitis C early can help keep the liver from becoming damaged. That in itself makes getting the simple Hepatitis C blood test a good idea. The Hepatitis C test isn’t a routine test. You’ll have to ask your doctor for it. If you’re a baby boomer, don’t worry about making the request. The Centers for Disease Control suggests that all baby boomers get tested at least once. Schedule your test on National Hepatitis Testing Day or the next time you visit your doctor.
**IMAGINE...**

A one-stop shop Web resource providing a personal health assessment and plan, and a variety of Web tools—including cardio and strength planners, nutrition/meal planners, online coaching, a wellness library, and other resources.

Simply visit www.healthyroads.com to see it all today!

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**Diet and Exercise**

**Good Grilling**

The days are getting longer and warmer. Grilling season has arrived! It’s time to gather with friends and family for a good barbecue. With fresh, lean meats and plenty of fresh vegetables, grilling can be not only a fun way to eat but a nutritious one, too. So gather your foods, utensils, and pals, and follow these tips for a safe, healthy barbecue:

- **Start with a clean slate.** Before you start your barbecue, follow the cleaning instructions on your grill. Don’t forget to clean the inside of the lid. What may look like peeling paint could be old grease and smoke. You don’t want that falling onto your food.

- **Practice food-prep safety.** Bacteria can contaminate food and make you ill. Bacteria grow very fast at room temperature. Never thaw or marinate meat on the counter. Keep it in the fridge until you’re ready to grill. Don’t reuse platters and utensils that touched raw meat. And be sure to wash plates and utensils that have touched raw meat, poultry, or fish with hot, soapy water between uses.

Another issue is possible carcinogens. Some compounds that have been shown to increase cancer risk occur when meats are grilled. Keep smoke under control by using lean meats and trimming away any extra fat. Also, consider marinating meat with herbs and spices before cooking. Studies show that this step can help reduce the compounds from charred meat that can cause cancer.

- **Some like it hot.** Cook meat thoroughly, but not too fast. The black, burnt edges of meat contain compounds that may increase cancer risk. You can pre-cook in the microwave to limit time on the grill. Save sweet sauces for the last few minutes to prevent burning. To make sure it’s fully cooked, use a thermometer. The temperatures that each type of meat should reach are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meat Type</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steaks or chops</td>
<td>145 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground red meat</td>
<td>160 degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>165 degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Garden variety grill.** Not only are vegetables good for your health, but grilling them does not create the cancer-causing chemicals that can occur in grilled meats. So grill up those veggies—and even fruits!—to your heart’s content. Be the first in your family to grill a peach.

- **Practice grill safety.** Use utensils with long handles to avoid burning your skin. Make sure your clothing doesn’t have tails or strings that could catch fire. And always be prepared for fire. Have a fire extinguisher nearby. If you don’t have an extinguisher, have a bucket of sand or a working garden hose handy.

With these tips, and a sense of adventure, your grilling season can be off to a great start. Keep in mind that the grill is outside. Be sure to wear sunscreen to keep yourself from getting charred!

**HEALTH TIP:**

When meat is cooked over high heat, it can form HCAs. HCAs are chemicals that are considered cancerous. You can cut HCAs by 70 percent or more by seasoning meat with an herb and spice rub or marinade before grilling it.
The total number of smokers in the United States is dropping. But light smokers—those who only smoke occasionally—are on the rise. Also known as social smokers, these smokers often believe that they’re not at risk for tobacco-related illness. However, using even small amounts of tobacco raises health risks. Almost a quarter of all smokers are social smokers. They may use tobacco to cope with stress, to fit in with friends who smoke, or because they feel it’s trendy. They often smoke in group settings like weekend parties or outside bars and restaurants.

Social smokers often deny having a problem with smoking, and many times don’t even think of themselves as smokers. They may feel that their habit is not an addiction and that they can quit any time they want to. They may even ask others for cigarettes to avoid buying their own. But 1 in 2 social smokers keeps the habit for years. One study found that 50 percent of social smokers were still smoking four years later.

If you’re a social smoker, you should know that there is no safe amount of tobacco use. Light smoking isn’t as harmful as heavy smoking, but it still harms your health. Even light smokers have been found to have a markedly higher risk for heart disease, several types of cancer, and early death.

No matter how often you use tobacco, quitting is one of the best steps you can take for your health. Quitting is often easier for light smokers—but not always. So when you’re ready to quit, make a plan and commit to it. Using these tips can help you stay tobacco free:

- **Manage your social triggers.** When possible, avoid the situations that are likely to make you want to smoke. These might include places, events, and even people. You don’t need to give up your social life. Instead, try hosting smoke-free events at your home or meeting with friends at public places where smoking is not allowed.

- **Manage your physical triggers.** For example, if alcohol makes you want to light up, choose nonalcoholic drinks. Don’t linger at the bar near the sight and smell of alcohol or cigarettes. Also, plan ahead for cravings. Keep in mind that most cravings only last a few minutes. Chew a piece of gum, suck on a peppermint, and keep busy until the craving passes. Over time, your cravings will grow weaker and less frequent if you stick to your plan.

- **Manage your emotional triggers.** Recognize that quitting smoking can cause additional stress, but trust that such feelings will pass in time. There are many healthy ways to ease unpleasant feelings. Go for a walk in the sun. Take a relaxing shower or bath. Breathe deeply or meditate. Eat a healthy, satisfying snack. When you need extra support, don’t be afraid to ask for it from family, friends, a doctor, or a professional counselor. Former smokers can be especially helpful.

One more tip: Pinpoint your reasons for quitting. One might be your health. Another might be to spare a loved one from secondhand smoke. Whatever your reasons, write them down and look at your list often. Remembering what motivates you can help you negotiate the road to freedom from tobacco.

If you’re trying to kick the tobacco habit, Healthyroads.com offers tools that can help you succeed. From the homepage, click on the Tools tab. Then select Tobacco Cessation.
In challenging times, happiness can seem like a pretty slippery goal. So much of your mood and outlook can spring from matters outside your control, such as luck and circumstance. Some of your happiness might even be affected by your genes. But recent research supports the idea that about 40 percent of your happiness is indeed up to you. That’s great news. It means that you can boost your happiness regardless of your situation or background.

Achieving happiness can be tricky, though. That’s because what we think will make us happy sometimes doesn’t. For instance, take money. People often think that the key to happiness is having more money. Yet research shows that having enough money to get by on is all that’s needed to boost happiness. Beyond that, money doesn’t boost true happiness much.

Many people also seek happiness through pleasure. No doubt about it, having a good time is certainly a part of happiness. But experts suggest that being engaged in life and seeking meaningful activities are more essential. What’s an engaged life? One that’s full of work, family, friends, and hobbies. A meaningful life is one in which you use your own personal strengths for a larger purpose or common good.

If you feel like you could use a happiness boost, or worry that your natural level of happiness is a little low, take heart. Raising your level of happiness is possible if you have the will to be happier and then boost your happiness in a proper way.

Feeling motivated? Try out some of these proven happiness boosters:

- **Practice being thankful.** Be grateful for what you have. When you wake in the morning, think of at least one thing that you have in your life that enriches it.

- **Build and nurture relationships that matter to you.** Having strong connections with others is important to happiness and brings meaning to life. Pets count, too!

- **Learn to be optimistic.** If you tend to see the glass half empty instead of half full, make an effort to see things in a positive light. Try writing down negative thoughts when you have them. Then, ask yourself if there is another way to look at the situation. Then throw out what you’ve written. Research has shown that literally throwing away the negative thoughts can help.

- **Find your purpose.** Happy people are engaged in meeting their own goals and aspirations. Take time to discover or rediscover activities that are important to you.

- **Live in the present moment.** Don’t put off happiness until you buy a new house or car or take a trip. Find happiness in your current surroundings each day.

When you make an effort to boost your happiness, you build up the kind of mental resources that help you cope with life’s rough patches.

Here’s another good reason to make an effort to be happier: Happiness and other positive emotions are good for your health. They can reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke and even help fight off colds and flu.

To learn more, see Healthroads.com for a wealth of articles on managing mood and raising your happiness. From the homepage, choose the Resources tab and select Wellness Centers. Click on the Mental Health link. Then, on the left-hand side of the page, choose All Topics.