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**HEALTH & SAFETY  
NEWSLETTER**

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**MAY 2021**

## Think you're too young for a **heart attack**?

**Protecting your heart when you're in your 20s, 30s or 40s is probably the last thing on your mind. But heart attacks can – and do – happen to younger people.**

Heart disease has been the world's most common cause of death for decades. Although we think of it as an older person's disease because your risk of heart disease increases with age, that's not the whole story.

Research published in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation* found that heart attacks are increasingly occurring in younger people, especially women. The researchers studied more than 28,000 people hospitalised for heart attacks from 1995 to 2014. They found that the rate of heart attacks

in patients aged 35 to 54 had increased from 27 per cent at the start of the study, to 32 per cent by the end.

### **How to protect your heart – whatever your age**

There is no single cause for heart disease, but there are a number of risk factors. It's never too early to improve your heart health by doing the following:

- **Quit or reduce smoking.** Smokers are three times more likely to die of a heart attack or sudden cardiac arrest.
- **Improve your diet.** What you eat and drink substantially affects four of the major heart disease risk factors – high cholesterol, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity. A heart-healthy diet is low in saturated fats, salt, added sugar and alcohol and rich in plant foods like fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, nuts and seeds.

- **Get active.** Keeping physically active gives you double benefits. It improves blood flow in the vessels around the heart as well as controlling other heart disease risk factors including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and being overweight. Work your way up to 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.

### **Seek treatment early**

Heart disease is an older person's disease that kills young people, warns the Australian Heart Foundation. Getting treatment early is vital. Call emergency services if you experience chest discomfort or pain. This can feel like uncomfortable pressure, aching, numbness, squeezing, fullness or pain, which may spread to your arms, neck, jaw or back. Other less obvious symptoms include a burning feeling in your chest and shortness of breath. ✕



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May 5 is [World Hand Hygiene Day](#).

Each year the SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign highlights the importance of clean hands. It's focused on the continued global promotion, visibility and sustainability of clean hands especially at point of care.

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# When should I **worry** about these **health symptoms**?

We all have symptoms of ill-health that come and go. Most are not scary and will pass given a little time. Sometimes though, it's worth getting them checked out.



What do you do when you have a health symptom you're a little concerned about? Looking it up online can either be reassuring, or so alarming you want to rush to the nearest hospital. Here are four common symptoms that may justify a visit to your doctor.

## Dizziness

Some people say they're dizzy when they feel lightheaded or off balance, others use it as a term to describe the feeling of their surroundings spinning. Dizziness can be caused by a wide range of things: an ear condition such as a viral infection; dehydration; certain medications; stress or anxiety; or low blood sugar (particularly if you have diabetes).

**See your doctor** if you feel lightheaded or off balance for no apparent reason, you have repeated episodes of dizziness, or you are worried about it. Even though dizziness is a common symptom that isn't usually a sign of anything serious, it's worth getting it checked out. It can be helpful to keep a

diary of your dizziness, recording what you were doing at the time, how long it lasted, and whether you had other symptoms such as nausea or headaches. This can help your doctor make a more accurate diagnosis.

## Snoring

According to the Australian Sleep Health Foundation, about 40 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women snore to some degree, and about 15 per cent of us snore on most nights.

You're more likely to snore if you've been drinking alcohol, have a blocked nose, breathe through your mouth, sleep on your back, have allergies, smoke, are pregnant, or are overweight. There is a spectrum of snoring, with simple occasional snoring at one end, and snoring as a symptom of sleep apnoea at the other.

**See your doctor** if your snoring is extremely loud, causes daytime sleepiness, affects your ability to think clearly, or if your partner hears you stop breathing, gasp or choke during the night. These are all signs of sleep

apnoea. Sleep apnoea is a stress on your body and can increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes, depression and accidents. It's important to have it investigated, and there are a number of effective treatments available.

## Ongoing cough

Most coughs are nothing to worry about and usually clear up within three weeks. That can seem an awfully long time, particularly if your cough is keeping you awake at night. You often get a cough during a cold, flu or sinusitis, when you have an allergy such as hay fever, or you have inhaled dust or smoke. It's also a symptom of bronchitis, asthma, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease and is common in smokers.

Cough can also be a symptom of COVID-19 so make sure you get tested for this if you develop a cough.

**See your doctor** if you've had a cough for more than three weeks, or if it's keeping you awake and affecting your daily activities. Get checked out straight away if it's



particularly severe, you cough up blood, experience any shortness of breath or chest pain, or have any other symptoms such as unexplained weight loss, a change in your voice, or any lumps or swellings in your neck.

### Unintentional weight loss

If you're losing weight without a change in your diet or exercise routine, there can be a number of reasons why.

It's not uncommon to lose weight after a stressful event, for instance, such as bereavement, divorce, or changing or losing your job. Stress can cause you to miss meals or affect your appetite, but this is usually only temporary. Once the stressful event has passed, the weight loss will usually resolve. If you feel that your stress is ongoing or you are experiencing depression, it's important to seek help as you may need some support or counselling.

**See your doctor** if you're losing weight and you don't know why. According to the Mayo Clinic, losing more than five per cent of your weight within six to 12 months may indicate a problem. Weight loss is a symptom of various conditions, many of which be easily treated, such as thyroid disorders, a bacterial or viral infection, certain medications and dental problems. ✕

## Why do so many people get headaches?

Very few of us can say we've never had a headache. At any given time around 15 per cent of people will be taking pain-relieving medication for one. It's not that surprising, given the many different types and causes of headaches.

You can get a headache when you're stressed, dehydrated, or trying to cut down on caffeine. Other causes range from eye problems and high blood pressure to bad posture, jaw problems, hormonal fluctuations and even tight-fitting swimming goggles. Most headaches go away on their own and are not a sign of something more serious.

Call your doctor if your headaches are more frequent or severe than usual; worsen or don't improve with over-the-counter painkillers; or keep you from working, sleeping or enjoying your normal activities.

Call emergency services or go to the hospital emergency department if you have:

- sudden onset of a severe headache or it makes you lose consciousness
- a head injury
- trouble seeing, walking or speaking
- numbness in your arms or legs
- a high fever (39° to 40°C / 102° to 104°F)
- nausea or vomiting (if not related to a flu or hangover)



# How to cope when you **don't** love your job

**Fact: you won't always love your job.**

**Fact: every job has parts you won't love.**

**Fact: your boss has had jobs they haven't loved either.**

There are a thousand reasons why you might not love your current job.

It may have changed significantly since you took it on.

You may have taken it as a stepping-stone to the kind of job you really want.

You may have accepted an opportunity cost – perhaps a less interesting job for more flexibility.

Let just say, for whatever reason, you're not in your dream job right now.

**Fact:** you can still be happy.

Here are five ways to be happier in a job you don't love.

## Re-establish your why

Oliver Burkeman, author of *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking* and *Help! How to Become Slightly Happier and Get a Bit More Done*, says the first step is to be clear on why your job matters to you.

You might enjoy helping your colleagues solve problems, or you're simply there to support your family. Remind yourself of this greater purpose.

## Find a skill you can develop

It can feel amazing to find something you're good at. Even if it's not your "life's purpose", look for a skill you can develop. It could be

professional or personal. Want to nail being able to do a presentation in front of a group of people? Maybe there's a local Toastmasters group you can join, or ask if you can start one at work. Always wished you were a whiz at Excel? Look for chances to put up your hand for opportunities beyond your day-to-day job.

## Make it bearable for others

Seek out ways to connect with people and brighten their day. It's scientifically proven that an act of kindness makes you feel better too.

Make it a mini-challenge every day to do something kind for someone, or have an in-depth conversation and really get to know a colleague.

## Keep a gratitude list

It's so easy to only focus on the negative. Especially if your colleagues are also unhappy with their job, it can be tempting to wallow in misery.

Start making a list of tiny things you're grateful for about your day. It could even be how easy the commute was this morning, or the new biscuits in the kitchen.

## Celebrate small wins

Set yourself a definable goal each day, and congratulate yourself when you do it. No need to wait for your boss or colleagues to give you positive feedback; you can do it yourself. It doesn't have to be big. The goal could be doing that project plan, or sending that email you've been putting off. No one needs to know – unless you want to encourage others to do the same! ✕

TODAY  
I AM  
GRATEFUL



# Bipolar disorder: what it means and how you can help

Someone tells you they have bipolar. You don't feel you really know what it is, and you definitely don't feel you know how to help them. Here we cover the foundations of bipolar disorder so you know what to say and how to help.

Kanye West. Winston Churchill. Mariah Carey. Frank Sinatra. Jimi Hendrix.

They have all been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, a condition which involves alternating periods of intense mania (very high mood and energy) and severe depression.

Bipolar disorder tends to be episodic rather than persistent. This means people with the disorder can often have long periods of feeling fine. Their work and personal life go on as usual.

In fact, people with bipolar disorder are often highly creative, socially sensitive, perceptive, and have a strong drive to make the world better.

## Extreme ups and downs

During episodes, people with bipolar disorder have extreme moods. A manic episode can feel like an extremely high mood, or feeling very active or agitated. They can have racing thoughts and rapid speech.

People describe this high as “feeling like your brakes have failed”. They can feel themselves going too far, too fast.

The depressive episode can feel like an extremely low mood with feelings of hopelessness and sadness.

For some people, these episodes can be less extreme than others. There are different types of bipolar disorder, and everyone experiences it differently.

## How to support someone with bipolar disorder

### • Talk and listen

Allow and encourage them to talk about how they feel. The more we can talk about mental health at work, the healthier we'll be.

That said, it's important to respect their privacy. If they don't want others to know about their mental health issues, then you mustn't share with anyone else.

### • Ask them what helps.

Your friend has probably lived with this for many years, and they know what helps and what doesn't, both during and outside of episodes. Ask and respect their response; don't try to problem-solve for them.

### • Encourage them to keep up with treatment

It can be tempting for people with bipolar to stop medication or stop seeing a therapist when they feel well for a long time. This can be particularly true during episodes of mania, when they feel unstoppable.

With professional treatment, bipolar disorder can be managed well. Treatments usually involve a mix of medication, therapy and lifestyle changes.

You can be the firm voice of reason reminding them to keep going with whatever treatment plan they are following. ✕

## Watch for symptoms

The up and down episodes are often pre-empted by early symptoms.

The signs of oncoming mania include:

- Sleeping less
- Restlessness
- Speaking rapidly
- Increase in activity level
- Irritability or aggression

Depression warning signs include:

- Fatigue
- Sleeping more
- Trouble concentrating
- Loss of interest in activities
- Withdrawing from others
- Change in appetite

For more information, visit [blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://blackdoginstitute.org.au)



# How screens can affect your eyes

You may experience it as a headache at the end of the day. Or perhaps your eyes are sore or burning, and your vision is blurred. These are all signs of digital eye strain or computer vision syndrome.

Digital eye strain is more than just a work issue. Even though we can spend most of our working day in front of a screen, we often do the same when we get home. Optometry Australia reports that their members see increasing numbers of people presenting with eye strain due to overuse of digital devices such as smartphones and tablets.

## Why do devices strain our eyes?

- When reading on a device, we tend to blink less than usual. As blinking is key to moistening the eyes, this can lead to dry, gritty, red eyes.
- We view digital screens at less than ideal distances or angles – often way too close
- Devices often have glare or reflection, or poor contrast between the text and the background.
- Other factors that can make symptoms worse include poor posture, incorrect setup of your computer or workstation, incorrect prescription in your glasses, and circulating air from an air conditioner or nearby fan which can further dry your eyes.

## What can you do about it?

**Take breaks.** Rest your eyes by looking away from the digital screen.

**Blink often.** Remind yourself to blink regularly when looking at a screen, as this will moisten your eyes.

**Use artificial tears.** Over-the-counter artificial tears can help prevent and relieve dry eyes. Use them even when your eyes feel fine to keep them well-lubricated and prevent a recurrence of symptoms.

**Check the lighting.** Reduce the amount of overhead and surrounding light that is competing with your device's screen.

**Get your eyes checked.** Make sure you have appropriate vision correction, and consider investing in glasses or contacts designed specifically for computer work. Ask your optometrist about lens coatings and tints that might help too.

## Adjust your monitor and screen settings.

Position your computer screen so it's one arm's length in front of your face and enlarge the type for easier reading. Adjust the contrast and brightness to a level that's comfortable for you.

**Use a document holder.** If you need to refer to print material working at your computer, use a document holder, placed either between the keyboard and monitor or to one side. The goal is to reduce how much your eyes need to readjust and how often you turn your neck and head. ✕



## Ask an expert about ...

### The smoking cessation program Quit replies:

When you puff on a cigarette it takes just seconds for nicotine to go from your lungs to your brain. The nicotine triggers the release of a feel-good chemical called dopamine, giving you a little hit or buzz. But not for long. The nicotine soon fades, and you're craving another cigarette.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) provides you with nicotine, reducing tobacco cravings and feelings of withdrawal.

## Q What is nicotine replacement therapy and can I get addicted to it?

There are various types of NRT. The faster acting types, which include the mouth spray, gum, lozenges and inhalator, give you nicotine quickly and can help you get past the short, strong cravings. Although they are fast acting, they don't give you a nicotine hit as quickly as cigarettes do.

Nicotine patches provide a slower, steady level of nicotine over a longer period of time and are often used in combination with the fast-acting types.

Most people stop using NRT when they feel they no longer need it. The amount of nicotine

in NRT is lower compared to a cigarette. It also takes longer for nicotine to get to the brain and to give you a nicotine hit. This means it's much easier to stop using NRT than it is to stop smoking.

Some people may continue to use NRT for longer than recommended, possibly because they are addicted to nicotine, but this is still safer than continuing to use tobacco.

If you feel you are ready to quit smoking, ask your doctor to recommend a smoking cessation program. ✕

## App of the month

### Waterbalance

How much water do you drink each day? Is it enough?

Waterbalance is an app that helps you track your water balance based

on your lifestyle and biometrics. The idea is to form healthy water-drinking habits by discovering your ideal water intake and keeping track of your actual drinks consumed throughout the day.

The app features reminders that you can set and is available free on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

## Don't set your exercise goals too high

If you want to up the ante with your exercise, it's easy to assume that you need to set some challenging goals to get you motivated. In fact, the opposite might be true.

A study of goal setting and exercise in the journal *Health Psychology* found that inactive people start moving more if they receive daily step targets that exceed their usual number of steps – but only up to a point. If the exercise goals become too daunting, people typically start failing to meet them and lose motivation.

"Set precise, dynamic goals that are not too easy but realistic," said Guillaume Chevance, lead author of the study. The goals need to balance challenge and discouragement, he says. Chevance recommends that if you want to increase your step count, check the activity app on your phone for the past month and 'add 10 per cent' as the first week's goal. If you normally manage 5000 steps a day, add 500 steps, and keep updating the goal at least every week. ✕



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## News Bites



## Are you gambling with your eyesight?

We consistently rate eyesight our most precious sense yet don't prioritise essential eye checks. A new survey has found that very few people are able to properly identify the major risk factors for age-related macular degeneration (AMD) – the leading cause of blindness in most developed countries.

Many people over 50 have the early signs of AMD but may not know it until it's too late.

Symptoms of macular disease can include blurred central vision, distortion (straight lines appearing wavy), problems distinguishing faces and dark patches in your central vision. Any sudden changes in your vision should be checked with your eye health professional – an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

You may have early signs of macular disease without knowing, which is why regular eye examinations are so important. If you notice any of the symptoms of macular disease, do not ignore them. ✕

## When sleeping more doesn't fix you

Sleep and rest are not the same thing, argues Dr Sandra Dalton-Smith, author of the book *Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity*. And expecting sleep to restore your energy means you may be missing out on other types of rest you need.

One of these is sensory rest, says Dr Dalton-Smith. Anyone exposed to bright lights, computer screens, background noise and multiple conversations – whether in an office or on Zoom calls – can soon feel their senses becoming overwhelmed.

The solution? Counter the effects by doing something as simple as closing your eyes for a minute in the middle of the day. Better still, intentionally unplug from electronics at the end of every day.

# 1

## THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



## Walk a neighbour's dog

It's one action with multiple benefits:

- 1. Exercise:** The most obvious benefit of all is the physical activity. Walking improves your cardiovascular fitness, lowers your blood pressure, strengthens your muscles and bones and decreases stress.
- 2. Kindness:** Your neighbour would probably appreciate a break to get on with other things. A simple act of kindness can not only increase your own serotonin and dopamine, giving you a mood boost, but also reduce the level of cortisol in your body.
- 3. Nature:** Assuming you can walk somewhere near some trees, your kind act of dog walking also gives you a nature boost. Spending time in nature is proven to improve your physical and emotional and cognitive health. It strengthens your immunity and lowers your stress.
- 4. Dogs:** simply patting a dog can boost the feel-good hormone oxytocin, as well as reduce stress and blood pressure.
- 5. Connection:** having a cute dog with you is a fabulous way to connect with others in your neighbourhood. Dogs tear down social barriers, and you'll find many people are far more friendly when you have a dog in tow. Try out the local dog park too. You might even make new friends!

## EAT SMARTER

### Mushrooms

In ancient Egypt, pharaohs loved the health-giving power of mushrooms so much that they declared them a royal food and banned commoners from touching them.

We now have the science to prove these health-giving powers. We know mushrooms have good amounts of vitamins B plus zinc and magnesium, along with protein and fibre. They are also one of the few foods with vitamin D, especially if you buy ones labelled as high in D.

We also know mushrooms contain some rarer benefits, ones which can help fight aging, heart disease and even cancer.

#### The fungi of youth?

Mushrooms contain two unusual-sounding antioxidants, ergothioneine and glutathione, which might help decrease the chance of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Some mushrooms are even good for wrinkles. They contain phenolic veratric acid which has been shown to help improve the look of wrinkles.

#### Cancer research

A number of studies have revealed interesting links between mushrooms and the fight against cancer.

A study published in the journal *Experimental Biology and Medicine* found certain mushrooms "significantly suppressed" breast cancer cell growth and reproduction.

Mushrooms contain bioactive compounds with anti-cancer and anti-tumour properties. In Japan and China they are used as standard cancer treatments either alone or combined with radiation or chemotherapy.

#### Strengthen your immunity

Mushrooms contain a powerful antioxidant called selenium, along with the fibre beta-glucan and a sugar molecule called lentinan, which all help boost your immune system in different ways.



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