This month, as we respond to the new Coronavirus and all the stress that comes with it, many of us are feeling anxious and uncertain. This can affect our physical health, too, because stress can trigger hormones that lower energy and the ability to fight infection, and make it difficult to sleep. If you’re having trouble with stress, please call us! CareMore has skilled professionals to help you manage stress, whether it’s temporary or long term.

In April, we also focus on Alcohol Awareness and Foot Health. We don’t think about our feet a lot but they’re really important! So this month, let’s make strides in reducing stress and health risks, and supporting our feet! After a while, these choices will become healthy habits that contribute to a healthier lifestyle.
In a survey from the American Institute of Stress, 77% of participants said they experience the side effects of stress. And 33% said they’re dealing with extreme stress, which can lead to many other serious conditions.

**SO WHAT CAN WE DO?**

1) Get back to basics: get enough sleep and eat healthy foods

2) Get as much physical activity as possible

3) Keep in touch with friends and family by phone or virtually. Social connection is really important for your physical and mental well-being.

4) Meditation, no matter how brief, can help your overall physical health
Alcohol Awareness Month is a good time to reflect on your relationship with alcohol and to establish some healthy routines around drinking.

**ALCOHOL FACTS – STRAIGHT UP**

- According to the CDC, there are 6 alcohol-related deaths every day from alcohol poisoning

Alcohol affects everyone differently:
- You have to know your own tolerance levels
- Alcoholism is different from Alcohol Abuse
  - **Alcohol Abuse** is characterized by:
    - relying on alcohol for relaxation
    - drinking and driving
    - strained relationships with family and friends
    - legal issues
    - neglected responsibilities
  - **Alcoholism** is characterized by:
    - an inability to stop drinking
    - lying about drinking
    - drinking in secret
    - reliance on alcohol to complete everyday activities

The effects of alcoholism are dangerous. It’s important to know them:
- Weakened immune system
- Cancer
- Liver issues
- Brain damage
- Increased risk for depression

How do you know if you’re drinking too much?
- Engaging in risky or dangerous behavior
- Violent behavior
- Increased thoughts of suicide
- Memory and concentration problems
- Breathing problems
- Issues with fine motor skills
- Self-harming
As harmful as the effects of alcohol can be, there are also a lot of treatments and support systems available for both alcohol abuse and alcoholism. They include:

- Therapy – individual and group settings
- Healthy, alternative coping skills
- Stress management
- Support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

The path to a healthier life by limiting or eliminating alcohol starts with small steps. So this month, if you choose to reduce your drinking, start by drinking in moderation and then continually lower the amount. If you do recognize that you have a problem, please reach out to your Care Team to start a conversation and get help. There are a lot of options for addressing problems with alcohol, so you can start living a healthier life.
How does it spread?

- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes
- Through the air by coughing and sneezing

How do I protect myself from COVID-19?

- **Stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed**
- **Wash hands** often
- **Avoid touching** eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- **Avoid contact** with sick people
- **Cover mouth/nose** with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of COVID-19 can be mild, or in some cases be severe enough to require hospitalization. Symptoms primarily include:

- **Fever**
- **Shortness of Breath**
- **Cough**

**Symptoms may show 2-14 days after exposure!**

When to seek medical help:

If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider for advice. Isolate yourself and wear a mask before leaving the house, and avoid public gatherings. If you have mild symptoms you can recover at home.

If you need further guidance or are concerned for your health, you can reach a CareMore clinician 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through CareMore Anytime at 1-800-589-3148.
April is also Foot Health Awareness Month. With 26 bones and 33 joints, your feet are your body's foundation. If they're not sound, they can affect your knees, hips and even your lower back. The average person takes about 10,000 steps a day, adding up to three million steps a year, for an average of 115,000 miles in the course of a lifetime. But according to the American Podiatric Medical Association, about 20% of the U.S. population has at least one foot problem annually, whether as the result of ill-fitting shoes or underlying health problems like diabetes or obesity. So follow these simple steps to improve your foot health:

1. Inspect your feet daily. Use a mirror to check the bottom of your feet for injuries, cracks, peeling, or dry skin. This is especially important if you're diabetic. It'll help avoid infection or a non-healing wound.

2. Dry your feet well. Also dry between your toes to avoid fungal infections.

3. Your feet need sunscreen too! Apply between toes and on ankles to avoid sunburn and prevent skin cancer.

4. Have an annual foot inspection with a podiatrist to check for problems such as loss of circulation or loss of sensation (neuropathy).

5. Wear shoes with good support and a heel lower than two inches.
The most successful treatments for stress focus more on behavioral therapy, physical activities and mindful exercises. Many over-the-counter herbal remedies that are meant to help with anxiety can also pose risks, including liver problems (kava), falls (valerian), and blood thinning (chamomile).

The best treatments are the ones you give to yourself: avoiding individual stress triggers, and doing stress-reducing activities like deep breathing, taking short breaks, exercising, meditating, journaling, practicing yoga, and even drinking green tea. They really work!

FEET FIRST!

These exercises can help ease foot and ankle pain, and soreness. And when you’re not experiencing discomfort because of foot pain, you can be more active. Here are a few good foot exercises to get you on the right track:

**Toe Curls**

This exercise will strengthen the muscles on the top of your feet and toes.

Sit in a straight-backed chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Lay a kitchen towel or hand towel on the floor in front of you so the short end is at your feet.

Put the toes of one foot on the end of the towel, and scrunch your toes so you pull the towel toward you.

Repeat five times with each foot.

You can increase the difficulty of this exercise by placing a small weight (like a can of soup) on the far end of the towel.

**Big Toe Stretch**

Keep good range of motion in your big toe with this three-part stretch. It feels good after wearing shoes all day.

Sit in a straight-backed chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Pick one foot up and place it on your opposite thigh.

Gently use your fingers to stretch your big toe up, down, and to the side—away from the other toes. Hold the stretch in each direction for five seconds.

Repeat 10 times in each direction.

Repeat with the opposite foot.
**Tennis Ball Roll**

Rolling the bottom of your foot on a hard ball can ease arch pain and treat plantar fasciitis.

Sit in a straight-backed chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Place a tennis ball on the floor near your feet.

Put your foot on top of the tennis ball and roll it around, massaging the bottom of your foot.

Increase or decrease pressure as needed.

Roll for two minutes on each foot.

You can also use a frozen bottle of water if you don’t have any tennis balls handy.

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**GRANOLA BERRY PARFAIT**

Parfaits are perfect little meals when you want a light breakfast, snack or even dessert. They’re easy to customize to your special taste, and cost effective!

**YIELD:** 4 Servings

**Ingredients:**

- 3 cups of nonfat yogurt, any kind
- 1 cup of fresh or defrosted strawberries
- 1 pint of fresh blackberries, raspberries, or blueberries
- 1 cup of granola

**Directions:**

1. Layer 1/3 cup vanilla yogurt into the bottom of 4 tall glasses
2. Combine defrosted strawberries and juice with fresh berries
3. Alternate layers of fruit and granola with yogurt until glasses are filled to the top
4. Serve immediately so the granola stays nice and crunchy
HEALTHY SOLUTIONS FOR APRIL

Down:
1. For daily foot inspection, use a _
2. Important way to help prevent COVID-19
3. Great stress reliever
4. Great exercise for foot health

Across:
1. Mirror
2. Wash Hands
3. Meditation
4. Parfait
5. Alcoholics Anonymous
6. Support group for alcoholism
7. Health danger of alcoholism
8. COVID-19 is a new _

Down: 1) Mirror 2) Wash Hands 3) Meditation 5) Toe Curls
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From preventive screenings and wellness classes to pharmacy-medication management, plus many other services, our Care Centers ensure you get the excellent care you deserve.

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It’s hard to extract much delight from uncertainty
The hardest deception to cure is that which is self-imposed
Gratitude is a life-saver

Send some WOW (words of wisdom) of your own to wow@caremore.com