

HEALTH

Why Culturally Competent Health Care Matters

For many years we've celebrated Black History Month at BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. But this year's Black Health and Wellness theme sparked some of the most inspiring discussions yet.

At BlueCross, we believe in health equity and are committed to deepening our understanding of the diverse people we serve and creating specific standards and practices that will help improve their health outcomes. That's what culturally competent care is all about.

During our recent employee Black History Month event, we were fortunate to be in the company of an individual on the forefront of public health in America, and someone I consider a mentor and a friend, Dr. James E.K. Hildreth, the president & CEO of Meharry Medical College. Dr. Hildreth shared how he was led to pursue a career in medicine, and

discussed the history of health and wellness in the Black community as well as the journey toward advancing health equity.

His words were powerful and helpful in understanding what social determinants of health are and how they affect some people more than others. He reminded us that access to education and quality health care, your neighborhood, the built environment that we find ourselves in – and especially technology – all matter. And they all have the ability to create separation between people in disadvantaged communities and achieving better health.

We know that the COVID pandemic has exacerbated health disparities. And although minority communities have shown resilience, many remain at increased risk for a variety of health conditions.

Like Dr. Hildreth, I didn't see

Black doctors growing up, although I had heard of them. What I did see on a daily basis was a lot of hard work and determination all around me, which helped propel me to become a doctor. So when I was accepted into Georgetown Medical School, it wasn't just me entering those doors, it was the hopes and dreams of my entire family and community.

Now it's my hope that we continue these discussions – and the hard work and determination it takes to create change beyond this month's celebration.

Dr. Andrea Willis is senior vice president and chief medical officer for BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee.



9 Foods You Should Never Eat After Age 30

By Dr. Phillip Gould

Forty's the new 30, huh? Well, if you keep eating these foods, your 40-year-old self will look like it's 50.

Some of these foods have been found to increase wrinkles, induce obesity, shut down organ functions, and make you sick. Take a look and start cleaning out your kitchen of these foods today.

1. Canned Soup

We know, we know — chicken soup for the soul, right? Well, not if it's canned. A cutting-edge study published in 2013 found a connection between high blood pressure and skin aging.

Compared to their older-looking counterparts, female study participants with fewer wrinkles also had lower blood pressure. U.S. guidelines call for less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day, but many popular cans carry 40 percent of the day's recommended salt intake in just one serving.

2. Diet sodas

Stop thinking that dark sodas are worse for you. Both are pretty bad. Drinks like Mountain Dew and Fresca may look less chemical-filled than cola because of their lighter hue, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

Instead of caramel coloring—the chemical that makes Coke brown—Diet Mountain Dew and Fresca are colored with brominated vegetable oil, a chemical used in rocket fuel and flame retardants.

It has been shown to have negative effects on thyroid hormones and fertility, a primary health concern of people in their 30s. Added chemicals like BVO can contribute to internal inflammation, which has been linked to obesity.

3. Sugar-Free Snacks

Think you're doing better by eating "sugar-free"? Think again. If you've become thicker around the middle since turning 30, it may be a sign that your liver isn't functioning optimally.

Avoiding toxins like artificial sweeteners will help the vital organ

work more efficiently, and in turn, slim your middle. To jump-start the detox process, kick foods made with fake sweeteners (like sugar-free gum, candies, and snacks) to the curb and go for low sugar or things made with real/raw sugar.

4. Salami and Hot Dogs

Men, pay special attention to this: A 2014 study published in the Journal Epidemiology found an association between eating processed meats like salami and hot dogs to lower sperm count.

And interestingly enough, the meat's saturated fat content—a nutrient previously associated with poor sperm quality—wasn't to blame. For a safe bet, limit the amount of processed meat you consume.

Try to get all-natural and grass-fed, both of which limit the number of hormones you're eating.

5. Microwave Popcorn

In its purest form, popcorn is a healthy snack filled with energizing whole grains. But some food companies have managed to transform something wholesome into something harmful to our health.

Pop Secret's Butter Popcorn, for example, has five grams of trans fat per serving—that's more than double the government recommended daily limit to clog your arteries.

Trans Fats are particularly important to avoid as people get older because the risk of heart disease increases with age. For a healthier snack, go old school and pop your corn kernels on the stove.

6. Packaged Soy Sauce

Puffy, dark circles under the eyes tend to become more pronounced with each passing birthday—and being dehydrated makes matters even worse.

To wake up looking refreshed, steer clear of moisture-sucking salty foods like soy sauce (think of all those nights you had Chinese food takeout and used soy sauce packets on it). A mere tablespoon of the stuff has a whopping 879 milligrams of sodium!



7. Coffee Creamer

Coffee creamers contain titanium dioxide, an ultraviolet radiation blocker that doubles as a whitening agent. Besides conventional creamers, it's also found in so-called 'healthy' bottles like So Delicious' coconut milk-based varieties.

The additive has been proven to cause liver and tissue damage in mice, and may also have health implications in humans, according to a recent review of the chemical.

Coffee creamer is also typically packed with trans fats, often hiding under its lesser-known name: hydrogenated oil. Many of Coffee Mate's and other coffee creamer products have this ingredient that has been shown to diminish memory in adults under 45 years old.

8. Protein Bars

While younger folks might be able to get away with skipping breakfast or simply eating a starchy 'weight loss' cereal or bar, research suggests that eating 20 to 30 grams of protein at each meal is ideal—especially as we age.

Aside from its high sugar count, many protein bars only pack 10 grams of protein, which won't do much in terms of keeping you full and satisfied until lunch.

If you typically reach for a bar like this, swap it out for a quick homemade meal of boiled or scrambled eggs in light butter or olive oil and whole-wheat toast. You can try homemade protein shake or real (not 'non-fat') yogurt with



granola.

9. Margarine

I've been saying this for years. Remember those cheap brown tubs of butter-like substances growing up?

Butter alternatives like margarine are often made with partially-hydrogenated oils, one of the most common trans-fats. You may have heard that this type of fat is linked to heart disease, but what most people don't know is that it may also accelerate the skin's aging process by making the skin more vulnerable to ultraviolet radiation.

When the skin gets damaged by the sun, it breaks down the skin's elastin and collagen.

But now some butter substitutes are advertising non-trans-fat products. But that's not all, studies have also found that eating margarine can cause chronic inflammation, which may also accelerate wrinkle formation.

Stick to the real thing—just don't eat a lot of it. (BlackDoctor.org)

4 Helpful Tips for Children Living with Diabetes

Unfortunately, when it comes to sickness and diseases, children can be subjected to it too. As much as you would like to protect your child from any hurt, harm, danger or illness, there are some things parents just can't protect their children from. If you have a child who lives with diabetes, there was most likely a huge shift in both you and your child's everyday life. The feelings of anger, confusion and even helplessness could have developed with this new diagnosis and that's understandable. Though the feelings are valid, it's important to know your options on what you can do to help your child.

How Living With Diabetes Affects A Child

Living with diabetes as a child changes their life in more ways than one. One way they are affected by diabetes is through their blood flow.

Children living with type 1 diabetes have a higher risk of developing narrow blood vessels making it harder for the blood to move throughout the body.

They're also at a higher risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and strokes once they get older. No longer can a child binge on sugary sweets because too much sugar can cause damage to the walls of a child's blood vessels, which are used to nourish the nerves.

Diabetes can also affect a child's learning due to it creating difficulties for children to pay attention, how their brain processes things and their memory.

This can cause issues when a child is in school and living with diabetes because if they have no proper support from the school, the child's development might start to be in jeopardy.

Important Facts You Should Know as a Parent

It's important to know everything you can about a disease you or your child may be struggling with. Now, this doesn't mean going overboard with consuming knowledge to the point that you start to obsess. Simply learn the important points of the specific type of diabetes your child is living with so you know what to expect and prepare for.

Fact 1: There are two main types of diabetes, Type 1 and Type 2. Most children have Type 1 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is when the blood glucose is too high and the body cannot make the hormone (insulin) that's needed to help with high glucose. This type of diabetes just happens and no diet or specific type of lifestyle is the cause of it.

Fact 2: Though Type 2 diabetes wasn't found in children as commonly as adults in the past, it's now noted



that more younger children are being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is when the body doesn't use insulin well. The good thing is, Type 2 diabetes can be regulated with diet and exercise.

4 Helpful Tips For Children Living With Diabetes

Make sure that they continue living as a child should. Worry and prevention will only make it harder for the child and can have long-lasting effects on their mental health.

Make healthy eating and exercise fun for your child. Make the plating fun

when preparing meals, use colors and engage your child in activities outside the home even if it's a simple walk every day after school.

Put them on a schedule that they'll remember without you around. Teach them (and the adults around them) a helpful and fun way to remember when it's time to take their insulin

Change the words that you use. It's important for your child to know that they are living with a disease but make sure to use positive words instead of

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