

Wellness Beat

Advocate Health Center at Governors State University

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Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year, we have much to look forward to! August is recognized as national Back to School month, here are a few tips as we transition back:

1. **Identify your study space-** A quiet, dedicated work place or a change of scenery might be key.
2. **Create a planner-** Keeping track of school and daily life tasks can help to keep you on track and creating a routine.
3. **Reach out-** Having someone to talk to can help with questions.

4. **Step away for a break-** Don't load too much on yourself, take some time for you!

Following these tips may help to keep you on track to your goals. Let's go into this school year with positive energy and vibes!

Advocate Health Center at GSU
Appointments for sports physicals are available! [CLICK HERE](#) to schedule.

The Truth About Your Eye Twitch

It's annoying. It's persistent. And everyone has had one at some point in time. What is it?

It's the annoying eye twitch. And while sometimes the cause is obvious, the majority of time, it comes out of nowhere, and the underlying cause is unknown.

Dr. Daniel Lazar, an internal medicine physician at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Ill., offers some potential culprits for that annoying spasm:

- **Stress.** This is the number one reason your eye is twitching. In most cases, a twitch caused by stress resolves on its own when the stressful situation ends. Tips to de-stress like meditating or exercising often help alleviate that annoying twitch.
- **Not getting enough sleep?** This could cause your eye to spasm. Getting more sleep is the go-to treatment option.
- **Caffeine or alcohol.** Stimulants have long been thought to cause an eye twitch – especially when they are consumed in excess. Cutting back can often help that twitch subside.
- **Magnesium** helps keep your muscles functioning properly, so a deficiency can often be the cause of an eye spasm. Other signs of low magnesium levels include upset stomach and a change in appetite. If this is the cause, your doctor may recommend a supplement to help reduce twitching and ensure you are getting the recommended amount of the important nutrient.
- **Dry eyes.** Dry eyes can result from a variety of factors including contact lenses, medications and even age – all of which can lead to an annoying twitch. An easy fix is artificial tears.
- Bright lights, wind, physical exertion or eye strain. All these factors can cause a spasm, but often, these twitches are

temporary and subside when the cause is no longer present.

"I put eye twitching in the category of problems I refer to as 'a nuisance, not a threat,'" says Dr. Lazar. "Still, individuals should see a health care professional when twitching doesn't resolve after a few weeks, when your eyes completely close with each twitch, if you notice discharge, redness or swelling in your eyes, if your eyes droop or if you notice twitching in other parts of your face or body."

Some treatment options Dr. Lazar recommends for people with an annoying eye twitch include:

- A warm compress to the affected eyelid
- A gentle massage of the affected eyelid
- A reduction in caffeine intake or complete cessation
- Stress reduction
- An increase in daily sleep

In addition, two over-the-counter remedies for twitchy eyes are antihistamines and lubricating eye drops. For more extreme cases, there are invasive treatments like Botox injections or surgical removal of the offending eye muscles, says Dr. Lazar. "While an eye twitch is typically just an annoyance, it is also important to note that in some cases, there are brain and nervous system problems which have eye twitches as a symptom," says Dr. Lazar. "They include Bell's palsy, cervical dystonia, general dystonia, multiple sclerosis and Tourette's syndrome. These conditions are always accompanied by other fairly dramatic symptoms, so if an annoying twitch is the only sign that something's wrong, it is likely related to a more benign common cause like stress or fatigue."

Vaping and COVID-19 Can Show Identical Damaging Effects to Teens

While the effects of e-cigarettes and vaping have been more thoroughly studied, health professionals are now learning that having COVID-19 can cause similar detrimental effects to the lungs.

Data also suggests that adolescents who vape are at increased risk of becoming infected with and developing a severe case of COVID. To make matters worse, lung damage caused by vaping can make it harder for the body to fight infection.

“Vaping causes irritation and injury to the lung,” said Dr. Lauren Camarda, a pediatric pulmonologist at Advocate Children’s Hospital. “As the lungs react to the inhaled foreign and toxic material, an inflammatory reaction occurs, which can lead to fibrosis of the lung.”

In continuous users, the effects are known as “e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury,” or EVALI. Imaging tests on these individuals may show changes like pneumonia or interstitial lung disease.

Dr. Camarda says some affected patients have only vaped for days, weeks or months, while others vaped for years and only developed symptoms when product or use patterns changed. Others who have vaped for years may have no identified trigger as to why they ultimately manifest symptoms.

“One of the more striking experiences over the past year has been the similarities in presentation between patients with COVID and EVALI,” says Dr. Camarda. “Both groups of patients can present with respiratory and systemic symptoms and have abnormal imaging scans and elevated inflammatory markers in blood tests.”

Those who vape may experience shortness of breath or other difficulty breathing, chest pain or chest discomfort and cough. Some may require treatment in intensive care units, requiring ventilators to support breathing. Others have even died.

She explains that in the early months of the pandemic, adolescents were being admitted to the hospital for what clinicians presumed was COVID, but the teens tested negative multiple times. The care team would ultimately learn these adolescents had a history of vaping, and they’d then be managed for EVALI.

“We’re fearful of the effects of COVID, but we should also be strongly concerned about the health effects of vaping,” she warns. “There are reports of long-lasting respiratory symptoms and lung damage in patients who vape.”

Dr. Camarda strongly advises quitting vaping or smoking, even if there are factors that make it difficult, like the addictive stimulant nicotine. The rise in mental health issues during the pandemic also haven’t made things easier, as many adolescents use vaping products to self-manage behavioral symptoms like anxiety.

Dr. Camarda says that fortunately, many of the pediatric patients who have returned for follow-up care after quitting vaping have improved imaging scans and lung function tests. But for now, there is not enough information available to know if these patients will face long-term effects.

“Many things make quitting challenging, but your health care team is here to support you,” she says.

Frozen Chocolate-Banana Bites

Dark chocolate is drizzled on chunks of banana then frozen to make this sweet snack or dessert.

Ingredients

Makes 4 servings

- 2 medium bananas
- 1½ ounces special dark chocolate pieces (about 1/3 cup)

Preparation

Active Time 15m/Total Time 1h 15m

1. Peel bananas. Slice bananas into 1/2-inch-thick pieces. Line baking sheet with parchment or waxed paper. Arrange banana pieces close together in a single layer on prepared baking sheet.
2. In a heavy small saucepan, melt chocolate over low heat. Place melted chocolate in small resealable plastic bag. Seal bag and snip off a tiny corner. Drizzle chocolate over banana slices. Cover and freeze for 1 to 2 hours or until frozen.
3. Divide banana pieces among four freezer containers or small resealable freezer bags. Freeze for up to 3 days.



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