



OUTDOOR ADVENTURES HELP STUDENTS With Autism Improve Communication

Each year, 1 in 68 children in the US is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by socio-communicative impairments and restricted and repetitive behaviors and interests.

A new study showing the benefits of certain types of outdoor activities, led by Professor Ditzza Antebi-Zachor of the Pediatric Department at Tel Aviv University's Sackler Faculty of Medicine and Professor Esther Ben Itzhak of Ariel University, was published in *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*.

Fifty one children from seven special-education kindergartens in Tel Aviv participated in the study, which was conducted in collaboration with ALUT, the National Israeli Association for Children with Autism, and ETGARIM, a nonprofit that sponsors outdoor activities for disabled people. The children, aged 3-7, all followed the same educational protocols, but the intervention group of 30 students also participated in an Outdoor Adventure Program (OAP).

The intervention group underwent 13 weekly sessions of challenge-based activities with instructors. Each 30-minute session took place in urban parks near the participants' kindergartens and kicked off with a song. During the activities, the children used the outdoor fitness equipment, moving from one piece to another throughout the session. The activities required the children to communicate with the instructors and with their peers in order to accomplish certain things, such as asking for assistance or being noticed.

"Outdoor adventure programs are designed to improve intrapersonal skills and interpersonal relationships by using adventurous activities to provide individual and group problem-solving and challenge tasks," says Zachor. "The necessary tools for a successful OAP include establishing individual and group goals, building trust among participants, and providing activities that challenge and evoke stress but are nevertheless enjoyable.

"Our study shows that outdoor adventure activities benefit children with autism and improve their social communication skills. We suggest including these fun activities in special education kindergartens and in communication classrooms at school in addition to traditional treatments. Parents of children with ASD can also enroll their kids in after-school activities based on the principles of our research. It will allow the children to have fun during their leisure time while improving their communication skills."

GETTING READY FOR TAX SEASON:

Tips for Preparing to File

Tax season is almost upon us, and it is important that you have all of the necessary information available to you when you fill out and file your tax returns. This article lays out some general information to help you understand the filing process. If you have any specific questions related to your filing situation, it is important to consult with a tax professional.

How to File

Many people elect to file their tax returns electronically. This can be done in a variety of ways, including tax preparation software like Turbo Tax, consulting a tax return professional, or using the IRS' Free File software, if you qualify.

Forms to Include

If you are filing with a paper form, there are certain documents you must include. The required forms include:

- A copy of your W-2 for each of your employers over the last calendar year
- A copy of Form W-2C (a corrected W-2 form), if received from your employer
- A copy of Forms W-2G and 1099-R, if federal income tax was withheld

For more information on how to file, what forms to include, credits you qualify for, or any other filing-related questions, please visit the IRS' Interactive Tax Assistant tool. This interactive tool was designed by the IRS to help individuals navigate the tax filing realm.

IRS Free File software: <https://www.irs.gov/uac/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free>

IRS Interactive Tax Assistant Tool: <https://www.irs.gov/uac/interactive-tax-assistant-ita-1>

DECLINING STRESS LEVELS & How to Handle Stress at Work

Stress in the workplace is on the decline, according to a recent study from health portal provider MediKeeper, Inc.

In a new study, the majority of respondents said that on a scale of one to five, their stress level was at a two in 2016. This is down from 2014, where the majority said they were at a level three. Similarly, the number of people who reported their stress level increased by 58% over the same two-year period. If you experience stress at work, you can curb it with these simple tips:

- Make to-do lists of tasks and cross them off as you finish them.
- Talk with a co-worker about things that are bothering you. Getting support from friends is a great way to relax and reduce anxiety.
- If you continually run late, set your clocks and watch ahead to give yourself extra time.
- Read over your job description so you know exactly what is expected of you.

REGULAR SCREENINGS

Prevent Cancer & Save Lives

Cancer of the colon or rectum is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among both men and women in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 140,000 Americans are diagnosed annually with colorectal cancer, and more than 50,000 of those diagnosed die from it. However, colorectal cancer is 100% preventable through screenings that detect and remove small, pre-cancerous growths called polyps.

“Colorectal cancer really should get the same attention as breast cancer, prostate cancer, and skin cancer,” said Theodore Saclarides, MD, division director of colorectal surgery at Loyola University Health System. “Regular screenings really do save lives.”

When Mr. Quinn, a 57 year old man, became a new patient at Loyola last year, his physician prescribed a routine colonoscopy to catch him up on preventive health recommendations.

“I didn’t think anything of it, just that it was a routine exam that was going to reveal nothing wrong,” said Mr. Quinn. “What they actually found was a mass that was too big to remove during the colonoscopy.”

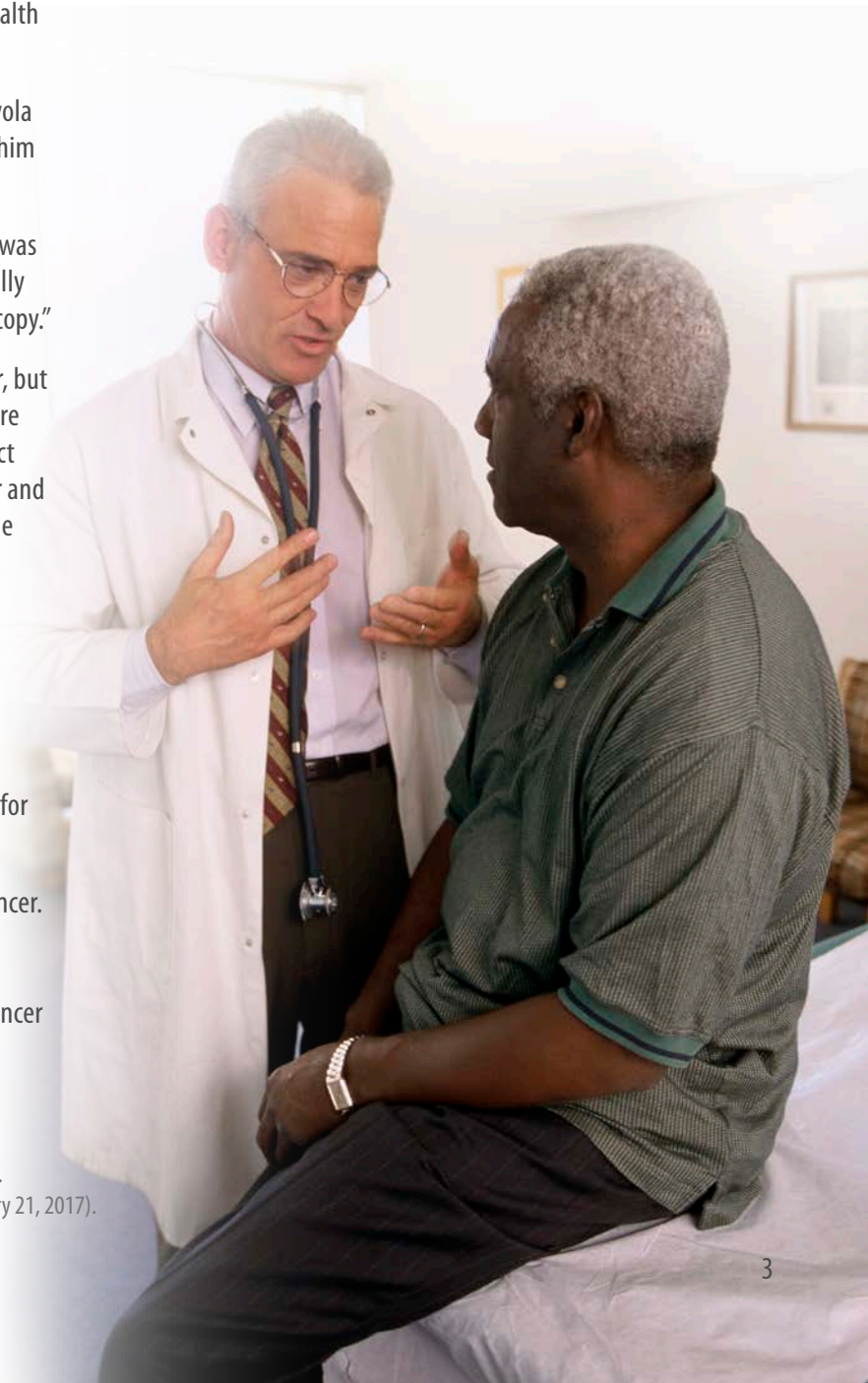
It’s important that you not only get screened for colorectal cancer, but that you ensure you are getting the correct kind of screening. There are two types of colorectal cancer screening tests: tests that detect colorectal cancer, and tests that can detect both colorectal cancer and pre-cancerous polyps. Colonoscopy, CT colonography, and flexible sigmoidoscopy are all screening tests that can detect colorectal cancer and pre-cancerous polyps.

Get checked, Dr. Saclarides advises, if:

- You have a change in bowel habits.
- You reach an age at which a colonoscopy is recommended; current guidelines recommend that everyone get screened for colorectal cancer starting at the age of 50.
- Your lifestyle and family history predispose you to colon cancer. People with a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, people with inflammatory bowel disease (such as Crohn’s disease or Ulcerative colitis), and people with hereditary cancer syndromes should start screening earlier.

After Mr. Quinn’s colonoscopy, a biopsy revealed the tumor might be early cancer, so the mass had to be removed quickly. Mr. Quinn was referred immediately to Dr. Saclarides, who removed a portion of the colon through laparoscopic surgery, a less-invasive technique involving a small incision, less blood loss, and a faster recovery time.

“[Mr. Quinn] is basically cured,” Dr. Saclarides said. “And it is all thanks to his getting a colonoscopy, his physicians recommending him to a colorectal surgeon, and his being compliant and following through with the procedure.”



Loyola University Health System. “Routine colonoscopies save lives.” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160302132717.htm (accessed February 21, 2017).

TRAVEL TIPS

For a Safe Spring Break



Traveling is usually the most stressful part of any vacation. Bad traffic, long lines at airport security, or misplaced travel documents can set a bad tone for the rest of the trip. Here are some tips you can follow to help you avoid travel woes.

Plan Ahead: A good trip is often well thought out and incorporates as many details about the vacation as possible. Things like coordinating transportation between the airport and your hotel, packing the appropriate clothing for the destination climate, and having all required travel and reservation documents are essential for a smooth trip.

Arrive Early: If you are flying, it is recommended that you arrive at the airport at least two hours ahead of your departure. This will ensure you have time to get through security checkpoints and get to your gate in time to board the plane.

Pack Smart for TSA: Security is a time-consuming and unavoidable ordeal at the airport. Make the process a little quicker by storing liquids in a separate, clear bag that you can pull out at the screening and making sure that items such as laptop computers are easily accessible.

MARCH RECIPE

Roasted Herb Potatoes



- 1 lb potatoes (3 cups when cubed)
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- ½ tsp. rosemary
- ½ tsp. salt

Preheat the oven to 450 F. Use vegetable cooking spray to coat a baking sheet large enough to fit all the potatoes. Next, wash, peel, and cut the potatoes into ½-inch cubes and place into a bowl. Combine the rosemary, oil and salt in a small bowl. Then, pour the mixture over the potatoes and stir to coat them evenly. Spread the potatoes evenly on the baking sheet. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until golden brown.

Yield: 6 Servings. Each serving provides 70 Calories, 2 g of Fat, 13 g of Carbohydrates, 0 g of Saturated Fat, 190 mg of Sodium, 2 g of Protein.

* Percentage daily values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Source: USDA