

A healthier today

Rush Generations

and a vital tomorrow



→ Your Health

Do You Need a Skin Check?

Skin cancer screenings can play an important role in early detection — and peace of mind.



David C. Reid, MD
Dermatologist

Not sure whether a spot on your skin is harmless or something that needs medical attention? A skin check, also called a skin cancer screening, can help answer that question.

“Skin checks can help detect and diagnose skin cancer as early as possible,” says **David C. Reid, MD**, a dermatologist at RUSH MD Anderson Cancer Center. “And we know that the earlier we can detect and diagnose skin cancer, the better the prognosis and outcome.”

Who should get screened

People with light skin or hair are at higher risk for skin cancer, but the condition can affect anyone. “In particular, Black people can develop skin cancer more commonly on the hands, feet and nails,” Reid says. Whatever your skin tone, if you notice any changes it’s important to have them evaluated.

Reid strongly recommends regular skin checks for people who have previously had skin cancer — typically every three to six months for at least one year after diagnosis. “If you have a history of skin cancer, you’re at a much higher risk for having a future skin cancer,” Reid says.

Even without a history of skin cancer, certain factors can increase your risk. These include a family history of melanoma, a history of precancerous lesions, 50 or more moles, frequent sunburns earlier in life, long-term sun exposure or tanning bed use. Age and a weakened immune system from medications or an organ transplant can also raise your risk.

What happens during a skin check

Your first screening will establish a baseline that lets your doctor track changes over time and recommend how often you need future screenings.

A skin check typically takes only 10 to 15 minutes. You don’t need to do much to prepare, but Reid advises skipping makeup and nail polish. “Skin cancer can even show up as a streak in the nail,” he says.

During the exam, you’ll wear a gown while your doctor examines your skin from head to toe, including areas that are difficult to see on your own, such as the scalp, back, underarms and soles of your feet. “That’s because skin cancer can occur anywhere on the body,” Reid says.

Your doctor will look for unusual spots and may use a handheld device called a dermatoscope to examine skin lesions more closely. They might also take photos or measurements for future comparison. If necessary, a small biopsy can often be done during the same visit.

Prevention and ongoing awareness

Your provider can give you personalized advice on sun protection. General recommendations include using SPF 30 sunscreen year-round, avoiding midday sun and tanning beds, and wearing protective clothing, sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats when you’re in the sun.

Between visits, monthly self-checks can help you notice changes early. “If you find a spot that is new, changing or otherwise concerns you, make an appointment with your doctor and be sure to point it out during your exam,” Reid suggests.

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Join us on May 20 for a discussion on skin cancer awareness. See the calendar insert for details.

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710 S. Paulina St.

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Why Staying Social Matters for Brain Health



Bryan James, PhD
Epidemiologist

Visiting friends, attending social gatherings and participating in community or faith-based activities may help protect brain health as we age, according to research conducted at Rush University Medical Center. The study suggests that staying socially active could help prevent or delay dementia and other forms of cognitive decline.

The research, published online in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, followed nearly 2,000 older adults over several years. None of the participants had dementia at the start of the study, and on average were about 80 years old.

“This study is a follow-up on previous papers from our group showing that social activity is related to less cognitive decline in older adults,” says **Bryan James, PhD**, epidemiologist and associate professor of internal medicine at Rush University. “We show that social activity is associated with a decreased risk of developing dementia and mild cognitive impairment, and that the least socially active older adults developed dementia an average of five years before the most socially active.”

The team found that participants who engaged more frequently in social activities had a 38% lower risk of developing dementia and a 21% lower risk of developing mild cognitive impairment compared to those who were least socially active. Even a delay of five years in dementia onset is significant, with the potential to add three years of life and reduce dementia-related health care costs by up to \$500,000 per person over a lifetime.

The study was part of the ongoing Rush Memory and Aging Project, which tracks common chronic conditions of aging. Participants completed annual evaluations that included medical histories and detailed cognitive testing. Over the course of the study, 545 participants developed dementia and 695 developed mild cognitive impairment.

Social activity was measured using a questionnaire that asked how often participants engaged in activities such as visiting friends or relatives, volunteering, traveling, playing games like bingo or going to restaurants, sporting events and other outings. Researchers assessed cognitive function through 21 standardized tests measuring memory, perceptual speed and visuospatial abilities.

Importantly, the researchers adjusted for other factors that could influence cognitive decline, including age, physical activity and overall health. Even after accounting for these variables, social activity remained strongly associated with better cognitive outcomes.

Why social engagement appears to protect the brain is not fully understood. “One explanation is that social activity challenges older adults to participate in complex interpersonal exchanges, which could promote or maintain efficient neural networks in a case of ‘use it or lose it,’” James says.

The findings highlight social activity as a promising, accessible approach to supporting brain health in later life. Researchers note the need for further studies to determine whether programs designed to increase social engagement can actively help delay or prevent cognitive decline.

Join us for discussions on brain health: June 3 for a presentation in Spanish and June 24 for a presentation in English. See the calendar insert for details.



Ready for a Healthier, Happier You? Discover Rush Generations Classes and Workshops

Have you been thinking about joining a Rush Generations class or workshop? You'll meet fellow participants like Lamar and Delores, who will tell you that these programs are helping them live a healthier life and focus on what matters. If you'd like more information about our free offerings, call **(800) 757-0202**.

“I signed up to learn about chronic pain because of pain I'm dealing with in my lower back. **This workshop is something that could very well change your life!** It made me more open and receptive to a lot of things. It also reinforced the importance of exercising, eating right, deep breathing, alternative medicines with a holistic approach and being a partner with my physician. This was a great group.”

— Lamar

“**The program helped me wake up with a smile and thank God for another day!** I start the day now with an action plan: exercise, drink water, set up a healthy breakfast, make a daily schedule with medication. I've given up most junk food and am eating more vegetables and fruit. I really enjoy getting out and meeting new friends. Come in and take the class and it will totally change the way you think each day.”

— Delores

Finding Grace and Support on the Dementia Caregiving Journey



Fayron Epps, PhD, RN

Nurse-scholar **Fayron Epps, PhD, RN**, holds the Karen and Ron Hermann Endowed Chair in Caregiver Research at The University of Texas at San Antonio. Join us on May 6 for Dr. Epps' lecture, "From Faith to Action: My Journey to Healing Communities Facing Dementia." See the calendar insert for details.

Q. What drew you to the work of dementia and family caregiving?

A. When I was young, both of my grandmothers were ill, but the caregiving experiences couldn't have been more different. In one family, caregiving felt like a joy, but in the other, it was total stress. That contrast led me to study family caregiving. Later, I learned that by 2030, nearly 40% of individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's or a form of dementia will be Black or Latino. That statistic created a sense of urgency and pushed me to focus my work on dementia caregivers in the Black community.

Q. Why do so many caregivers struggle without support?

A. Stigma plays a big role, because many people don't fully understand dementia. And many caregivers feel they have to manage on their own. When you're caregiving in silence, you don't have a good quality of life and you miss out on resources that could help. Some families also feel embarrassed or believe myths that dementia is a punishment or something to be ashamed of. Dispelling those myths is essential.

Q. How does learning about dementia change the caregiving experience?

A. Understanding what's happening helps reduce blame and improves daily life for both the caregiver and the person living with dementia. One pastor's wife told me that after learning about dementia, she realized her mother's behavior was caused by the disease, not an intentional act. Before, she would sometimes get frustrated and stop speaking to her mom; after the education, she said she saw her mother with new eyes. Shifts like that can inspire more grace and patience in caregivers.

Q. What teaching approaches seem to help caregivers the most?

A. We start with the basics — how the brain works and all of its functions — so caregivers can connect symptoms to what they're seeing. Another powerful experience is the Virtual Dementia Tour, which simulates impaired vision, issues with movement and sensory overload. Caregivers quickly realize how overwhelming everyday tasks can feel and understand why a loved one might become frustrated, shut down or cry.

Q. What practical tips can you offer caregivers?

A. First, remember that dementia encompasses much more than memory loss. People with dementia can become overwhelmed quickly; it helps to slow down, break tasks into smaller steps and be patient. Second, caregivers need care, too. One caregiver told me she didn't know she needed to take time to be still and nurture her own spirit. Doing that helped her show up with more compassion for her mom. Supporting yourself is not selfish — it's necessary!

Q. How can faith and community play a role in caregiving?

A. Some families stop attending worship because it feels too difficult, but I've seen moments of clarity and comfort when people with dementia return to attending and are able to reconnect spiritually. One caregiver reported that worship and prayer brought trust back into her relationship with her husband. Faith communities can offer education, emotional support and hope, even if spiritual connection looks different than it did before.



Q. How can caregivers ask for help from their church or community?

A. Start by sharing your story. Many leaders don't know who needs help because when they ask us how we're doing, the automatic response is "Good!" or "We're fine!" Be honest. Share real experiences, share if your loved one is becoming confused or overwhelmed by simple tasks. That opens the door to understanding and support. Remember: You are not alone.

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PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of Rush. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of Rush. Rush is an academic health system comprising Rush University Medical Center, Rush Copley Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital.

5 Common Eye Conditions

Are your red, itchy eyes a symptom of spring allergies, or is something else going on? **Jonathan Rubenstein, MD**, an ophthalmologist at Rush University Medical Center, highlights five of the most common eye issues and what to do about them.

1. Irritation and dryness

Burning, light sensitivity or dry contacts might point to dry eye. Prolonged screen time, wind and low humidity can worsen symptoms; try using artificial tears and washing your face twice daily with a gentle cleanser.

2. Redness

Allergies or viral infections like conjunctivitis can make eyes look bloodshot. Over-the-counter decongestants can help with allergies, and artificial tear eye drops can ease itching and irritation — but infections call for care to avoid spreading.

3. Spots and flashes

Floaters and flashes can be harmless, but can also signal retinal detachment, a serious condition. See your ophthalmologist right away if you notice any new symptoms.

4. Blurry vision

Blurriness might stem from cataracts or macular degeneration. Cataract surgery is routine, while macular degeneration often needs specialist care.

5. Changes in peripheral vision

Problems in side vision could be an early sign of glaucoma. Regular eye exams help catch it early, often before symptoms are obvious.

Join us on April 15 for a discussion on healthy vision in later life. See the calendar insert for details.

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Spring 2026 Free Health and Aging Events

The following lectures will be held virtually. You can view them online or listen to them via phone. Lectures typically last about one hour. For updates on Rush Generations programs, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.



To join these lectures online,

visit the Rush Generations YouTube page at the time of the event:

cutt.ly/RushGenYouTube.



To dial in via phone (audio only):

Call (312) 626-6799 at the time of the event and enter meeting ID 413 655 0125#.

April

Healthy Vision in Later Life Wednesday, April 15, 1 p.m.

Experts from Rush Ophthalmology will discuss recommended vision screenings and how to recognize common age-related eye conditions, such as cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease. You'll learn how to protect your vision and maintain eye health for years to come.

Allergy Awareness and Respiratory Health Wednesday, April 29, 1 p.m.

If you're one of the millions of Americans who deals with asthma and allergies, understanding your triggers can make breathing easier. Join us to learn how to recognize, manage and reduce breathing-related issues.

May

Finding Grace and Support on the Dementia Caregiving Journey Wednesday, May 6, noon

(note special start time)

This year's Schaalman Senior Voices Thought Leader lecture features nurse-scholar Fayron Epps, PhD, RN. She'll share her research experiences walking alongside African American families affected by dementia, with an approach that's grounded in faith, service and community wisdom.

Skin Cancer Awareness Wednesday, May 20, 1 p.m.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, but most cases are highly preventable with simple sun safety habits. Join us for an important discussion about how to protect your skin and recognize early signs of skin cancer. You'll get tips on sun protection and self-exams, plus information on the importance of early detection.

June

Salud Cerebral Miércoles, 3 de junio, 1 p.m.

¡Rush Generations quiere ayudarle a mantener su cerebro saludable! Acompáñenos durante el Mes de la Concientización sobre el Alzheimer y el Cerebro para escuchar como la nutrición, actividad física, el manejo del estrés y estímulo mental pueden ayudar nuestra función cognitiva.

Aging With Pride Wednesday, June 17, 1 p.m.

What does it mean to age with pride? We'll discuss how affirming care, chosen family and community connections support well-being for the LGBTQ+ community. You'll also hear strategies for fostering inclusive, affirming support systems.

Brain Health and Alzheimer's Awareness Wednesday, June 24, 1 p.m.

Join us for a National Alzheimer's and Brain Health Month lecture on brain health and dementia awareness. Learn how the brain changes as we age, how to distinguish normal aging from early signs of dementia and tips to support brain health.

For updates from Rush Generations, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

This quarter's offerings are a mix of virtual and in-person events.

For all events, please call (800) 757-0202 to:

- Pre-register for in-person meetings.
- Get a Zoom link for virtual meetings. You'll need internet access and the Zoom app on a computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam.
- Join a self-guided version of a workshop with a weekly conference call check-in.

Classes

Art for Emotional Wellness Tuesdays, April 7 to 28 1 to 3 p.m.

This course incorporates various forms of art and expression to foster emotional wellness.

Armour Academic Center
600 S. Paulina St., Room 1096
Chicago, IL 60612

Well-being Series Thursdays, May 21 to June 25 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Through a blend of mindfulness, acupressure techniques and the science of habit formation, you'll take charge of your well-being from the inside out.

Armour Academic Center
600 S. Paulina St., Room 968
Chicago, IL 60612

Workshops

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

**Tuesdays, April 7 to May 26
10 a.m. to noon**

In this supportive, eight-session workshop, you'll create a personalized wellness plan, learn stress management techniques and develop tools for maintaining well-being and managing life's challenges.

Johnston R. Bowman Health Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 316
Chicago, IL 60612

Fit & Strong Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, April 13 to June 10 (no class April 3 or May 25) 1 to 2:30 p.m.

For people with limited leg mobility, this program combines strength training, aerobic walking and education. You'll improve your balance, mobility and lower body strength while reducing pain and anxiety.

Ann Byron Waud Resource Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 438
Chicago, IL 60612

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention (Zoom)

**Wednesdays and Fridays,
May 13 to July 3, 11 a.m. to noon**
This free exercise program helps relieve pain, reduce stress and improve quality of life.

Walk With Ease Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. May 27 to July 10 (no class July 3)

Self-paced walking plus health education with a certified facilitator will help you improve mobility, reduce pain and connect with others.

Sankofa Village Wellness Center
4305 W. Madison St.
Chicago, IL 60624

Take Charge of Your Diabetes Thursdays, June 11 to July 23 9:30 a.m. to noon

Build skills and learn tools to manage your diabetes symptoms and keep your blood sugar under control.

Sankofa Village Wellness Center
4305 W. Madison St., Chicago, IL 60624

Both Rush University Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Polski (Polish)

UWAGA: jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

繁體中文 (Chinese)

注意: 如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)

한국어 (Korean)

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Tagalog

PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

العربية (Arabic)

ملاحظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية متاحة لك مجاناً. اتصل بالرقم 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)

Русский (Russian)

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните по телефону 1-312-563-2987 (телетайп: 1-312-563-2987).

ગુજરાતી (Gujarati)

સૂચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિ:શુલ્ક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

وُردًا (Urdu)

خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کو زبان کی مدد کی خدمات مفت میں دستیاب ہیں۔ کال کریں 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)

CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Italiano (Italian)

ATTENZIONE: In caso la lingua parlata sia l'italiano, sono disponibili servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti. Chiamare il numero 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

हिंदी (Hindi)

ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए सुप्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987) पर कॉल करें।

Français (French)

ATTENTION: Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 1-312-563-2987 (ATS: 1-312-563-2987).

λληνικά (Greek)

ΠΡΟΣΟΧΗ: Αν μιλάτε ελληνικά, στη διάθεσή σας βρίσκονται υπηρεσίες γλωσσικής υποστήριξης, οι οποίες παρέχονται δωρεάν. Καλέστε 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Deutsch (German)

ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Steppin' Into Summer Health Fair | Thursday, May 14, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Sankofa Village Wellness Center, 4305 W. Madison St. Chicago, IL 60624
Join us for information, screenings, resources and a spin on the dance floor!