Facts about El Paso

- 32% of children in El Paso County are living in poverty. That is 1 in 3 kids.
- 45% of El Paso children are living in single parent homes.
- 1 in 4 children in El Paso County will not graduate on time.
- 29% of kids age 16 to 21 are not enrolled in school or employed.
- El Paso is the 6th most impoverished city in the United States.
- On any given night, an estimated 1,241 men, women and children are homeless right here in El Paso.
- Approximately 91,000 El Paso residents do not have a checking or savings account.
- Average median household income in Texas is $48,259. Average median household income in El Paso is $37,030.

Exercise: 7 benefits of regular physical activity

No. 1: Exercise controls weight
Exercise can help prevent excess weight gain or help maintain weight loss. When you engage in physical activity, you burn calories. The more intense the activity, the more calories you burn. You don't need to set aside large chunks of time for exercise to reap weight-loss benefits. If you can't do an actual workout, get more active throughout the day in simple ways — by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or revving up your household chores.

No. 2: Exercise combats health conditions and diseases
No matter what your current weight, being active boosts high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good," cholesterol and decreases unhealthy triglycerides. This one-two punch keeps your blood flowing smoothly, which decreases your risk of cardiovascular diseases. In fact, regular physical activity can help you prevent or manage a wide range of health problems and concerns.

No. 3: Exercise improves mood
A workout at the gym or a brisk 30-minute walk can help. Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed. You may also feel better about your appearance and yourself when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence and improve your self-esteem.

No. 4: Exercise boosts energy
Regular physical activity can improve your muscle strength and boost your endurance. Exercise and physical activity deliver oxygen and nutrients to your tissues and help your cardiovascular system work more efficiently. And when your heart and lungs work more efficiently, you have more energy to go about your daily chores.

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Exercise: 7 benefits of regular physical activity (cont.)

No. 5: Exercise promotes better sleep
Struggling to fall asleep? Or to stay asleep? Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep. Just don’t exercise too close to bedtime, or you may be too energized to fall asleep.

No. 6: Exercise puts the spark back into your sex life
Do you feel too tired or too out of shape to enjoy physical intimacy? Regular physical activity can leave you feeling energized and looking better, which may have a positive effect on your sex life. But there's more to it than that. Regular physical activity can lead to enhanced arousal for women. And men who exercise regularly are less likely to have problems with erectile dysfunction than are men who don’t exercise.

No. 7: Exercise can be fun
Exercise and physical activity can be a fun way to spend some time. It gives you a chance to unwind, enjoy the outdoors or simply engage in activities that make you happy. Physical activity can also help you connect with family or friends in a fun social setting. So, take a dance class, hit the hiking trails or join a soccer team. Find a physical activity you enjoy, and just do it. If you get bored, try something new.

The bottom line on exercise
Exercise and physical activity are a great way to feel better, gain health benefits and have fun. As a general goal, aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. If you want to lose weight or meet specific fitness goals, you may need to exercise more. Remember to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program, especially if you have any health concerns.

Daily Habits That May Make You Sick
They say that home is where the heart is. But what you may not know is that it's also where 65% of colds and more than half of food-borne illnesses are contracted. The things we do around the house every day have a big impact on both our long- and short-term health. Here are six common household activities that may be making you sick.

Using a Sponge
The dirtiest room in everybody's home is the kitchen. That's because we deal with dead animal carcasses on our countertops and in the sink. Raw meat can carry E. coli and salmonella, among other viruses and bacteria. Most people clean their countertops and table after a meal with the one tool found in almost all kitchens: the sponge. In addition to sopping up liquids and other messes, the kitchen sponge commonly carries E. coli and fecal bacteria, as well as many other microbes. Ironically, the more you attempt to clean your countertops with a sponge, the more germs you're spreading around. People leave [the sponge] growing and it becomes teeming with [millions of] bacteria, and that can make you sick and become a reservoir of other organisms that you cross-contaminate your countertops with, your refrigerator, and other appliances in the kitchen.

Solution: Dip sponges into a solution of bleach and water before wiping down surfaces. That is the best and cheapest germicide money can buy so that you can clean your countertops, cutting boards, dishrags, or sponges after each meal preparation. In addition, once you've used your sponge, be sure to let it air-dry. Dryness kills off organisms. Another way to keep bacteria from building up in your sponge is to microwave it for one to two minutes each week. Put a little water in a dish and put the sponge to soak.

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Daily Habits That May Make You Sick (cont.)

Vacuuming
Conventional vacuum cleaners are intended to pick up and retain big pieces of dirt, like the dust bunnies we see floating about on our floors. But it's the tiny dust particles that pass right through the porous vacuum bags and up into the air. So, while our floors may look cleaner after running a vacuum over them, plenty of dust, which can exacerbate allergies, remains. Pet allergens and indoor dust, which contains the highest concentrations of hazardous materials like heavy metals, lead, pesticides, and other chemicals, are found in higher concentrations in the smallest particles of the dust.

Solution: Look for a vacuum cleaner with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. Unlike those in conventional vacuums, HEPA filters are able to retain the small particles and prevent them from passing through and contaminating the air you breathe in your home.

Sleeping With Pillows and a Mattress
The average person sheds about 1.5 million skin cells per hour and perspires one quart every day even while doing nothing. The skin cells accumulate in our pillows and mattresses and dust mites grow and settle. If that's not gross enough for you that a mattress doubles in weight every 10 years because of the accumulation of human hair, bodily secretions, animal hair and dander, fungal mold and spores, bacteria, chemicals, dust, lint, fibers, dust mites, insect parts, and a variety of particulates, including dust mite feces.

Solution: Cover your mattress, box springs, and pillows with impervious outer covers. Allergy-proof coverings seal the mattress and pillow, preventing anything from getting in or out, which protects you. Also wash your sheets weekly in hot water.

Grilling Meat
So much for the summertime staple: Barbecuing meat creates the cancer-causing compounds polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and heterocyclic amines (HCAs). When fat drips from the meat onto the hot grill, catches fire, and produces smoke, PAHs form. That's what's contained in that delicious-looking charred mark we all look for on our burger. HCAs form when meat is cooked at a high temperature, which can occur during an indoor cooking process as well.

Solution: Limiting your outdoor cooking, using tin foil, or microwaving the meat first is a sensible precaution. Wrapping meat in foil with holes poked in it allows fat to drip off, but limits the amount of fat that hits the flames and comes back onto the meat. Some of the excess fat can also be eliminated by first microwaving meat and choosing cuts of meat that are leaner. There's some evidence that marinating meat may lower the amount of HCAs formed.

Sitting in Front of the TV
Sitting in front of the television has become a national pastime and one of our least healthy behaviors, particularly because we often do it while snacking on food that is high in calories. When you're sitting there in a trance, you can really pack on some calories. Today, more than one-third of the U.S. population qualifies as obese and one-third qualifies as overweight. Thirteen million Americans are morbidly obese. Excess body weight puts us at greater risk for heart disease, cancer, arthritis, and a host of other diseases. That poses a greater health risk than the toxic cleansers under our sinks.

Solution: Turn off the TV, put away the bag of chips, and go for a walk.

Source: WebMd
Is there a cure for multiple sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis is a neurologic disease that affects women more often than men. Onset is most commonly in the 20s or 30s. MS is an autoimmune disease in which there is initially focal inflammation and then permanent damage to nerves of the central nervous system. The damage is really removal of the insulating material surrounding nerves. The tissue that insulates nerves is called myelin, and the damage is referred to as demyelination.

As a nerve that controls sensation or movement of a part of the body loses some of its myelin covering, the nerve may become dysfunctional. This can manifest itself as loss of that nerve's function which can be sensation, vision, movement or coordination of movement. Affected sensory nerves can also cause pain.

There have been tremendous advances in our ability to diagnose and assess MS with the development of magnetic resonance imaging. Unfortunately, our understanding of the cause of this disease remains limited, as does our ability to treat it. There is some limited success in stopping or decreasing the severity of an MS attack. We would also like to stimulate a regrowth of the damaged myelin over the nerve. Unfortunately, this is not possible at this time.

There are several types of MS. Some patients have disease that will have an acute exacerbation followed by a prolonged quiet period, which can last years or decades. This form of disease is referred to as relapsed remitting MS, or RRMS. Others have a disease that gets progressively worse over time. There are two types of progressive disease. In primary progressive MS, or PPMS, symptoms steadily worsen over time from the very beginning. Secondary progressive MS, known as SPMS, begins as relapsed remitting disease and becomes progressive over time.

For an acute exacerbation of multiple sclerosis that can result in neurologic symptoms and increased disability or impairments in vision, strength or coordination, the preferred initial treatment is usually a type of steroid called a glucocorticoid. Patients who do not have a good response to steroidal therapy are often treated with plasma exchange. Plasma exchange is an extreme therapy that removes antibodies to myelin from the blood. Patients with RRMS are often treated with immune-modulating drugs such as interferon or glatiramer acetate. Glatiramer is an exciting drug. It is a series of small proteins that are similar to myelin protein. It is thought to prompt the immune system to avoid attacking myelin.

Available treatments of primary and secondary progressive MS are of limited efficacy and have significant side effects. An additional fact to consider is that most trials have not lasted longer than two or three years and give only hints about long-term results of treatment.

In brief, no clinical trial has shown convincing evidence of benefit in the treatment of primary progressive MS. All suggested treatments for PPMS are empiric. Several drugs that are more commonly used in the treatment of malignancy, cladribine and mitozantrone, appear to have some activity. In contrast, there is definite modest benefit in some treatments for secondary progressive MS. These treatments include various regimens of steroid therapy and the use of some drugs that modulate the immune system. Many of these drugs are more commonly used in treatment of cancer and rheumatoid arthritis such as cyclophosphamide, methotrexate and interferon.

MS should be treated by a neurologist with experience in managing it. The American Academy of Neurology has published treatment guidelines for MS. (www.aan.com/go/practice/guidelines)

Source: CNNhealth.com