

## **Doctor's Advice: March into Spring**

By James McGuinness, M.D.

Spring is finally here and we all look forward to longer daylight, flowers bursting through the ground, warmer weather and April showers. Some important dates this month include Passover and Earth Day. April also reminds us of Child Abuse Prevention, Autism, Parkinson's disease, Sexual Assault Awareness and National Volunteer Month.

National Volunteer Month recognizes the impact of volunteering and the power of volunteers to build stronger communities. Throughout April, there will be numerous volunteer events worldwide. There will also be many opportunities in Monmouth County encouraging people to volunteer and to also acknowledge the impact volunteers have on the world. You might donate your time or make a contribution to a volunteer organization (e.g., Parker Family Health Center, JBJ & PBC Hope & Comfort Warming Center, First Baptist Church Heart Warming Center). Choose a cause and make a difference in someone's life. You will feel better about yourself. As a volunteer myself, I often reflect on how lucky I am compared to those less fortunate than myself. When I volunteer with the homeless people and speak with them, I find that some of them had a good life but then things changed, or some people never got to experience a 'good' life. The contrast between where I am in life and where they are can be mind boggling. We should all count our blessings.

It's been about four years since COVID was identified, and in that time, much has changed, including the virus itself. We now have pills and vaccines that can treat it and at-home tests that can identify an infection. Despite these achievements, COVID is still with us. Unlike Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Flu which increase in the fall and winter, COVID doesn't seem to belong to one season. Many people who have had COVID experience lingering and/or disabling symptoms that interfere with their life. This is known as long COVID. The National Institutes of Health recently launched large-scale clinical trials to better understand, treat and prevent long COVID. Talk to your doctor if you think you may have long COVID. Prevention is key to keeping yourself healthy and safe. Get

enough sleep, eat right, keep hydrated, avoid stress and exercise regularly. Get vaccinated. We all know the drill: Wash your hands, wear a mask when necessary, and keep your distance around sick people.

Go for a walk in the warm Spring weather. Enjoy the Great North American Eclipse on April 8, 2024, which will be a rare and beautiful event that offers us a unique opportunity to witness a period of total darkness during the day. With proper precautions, we can ensure a safe and enjoyable experience while witnessing this extraordinary event. Remember to never look directly at the sun during a solar eclipse as this can cause permanent eye damage.

Appreciate the smell of the flowers, stay hydrated and be safe. Happy Spring!

*The natural healing force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well. – Hippocrates*

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