

Ask a Patient Health News January 22, 2023

Health News: January 22, 2023

- The U.S. FDA (Food and Drug Administration) published a Consumer Update announcing that as of January 1, 2023, **sesame** is required to be labeled as an **allergen** on packaged foods, including dietary supplements. Food products containing sesame already on their way to or on store shelves before 2023 without this labeling don't have to be removed from the market.

<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/allergic-sesame-food-labels-now-must-list-sesame-allergen>

- For 30 years, the 49-year old conservation biologist experienced **periodic fainting episodes** while exercising. When she was in her 20's, after being treated for Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome (WPW), a disorder that causes an overly fast heartbeat, she was told that her continued fainting spells were caused by intense exercise and were essentially harmless. But one day in January 2022, she realized something was very wrong when she collapsed during a run and was unable to get up for more than 20 minutes. Usually she recovered right away. After months of medical consultations to find out the cause, her eventual diagnosis upended the one from more than 20 years earlier. Check out Sandra Boodman's latest **medical mystery**.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/01/14/fainting-spells-cardiac-mystery/>

- Why was this ice skating coach, a former "Disney on Ice" performer who was used to spinning in place without getting dizzy, now suddenly getting **dizzy** simply by turning around? This mom of a preschooler gave up coaching while she sought answers to explain and treat her condition, but she had more episodes in the following months, along with symptoms of breathlessness, blurred vision, and irregular heart rhythms. Read about her experience and eventual diagnosis in this *Prevention* story.

<https://www.prevention.com/health/a42250064/medical-mystery-dysautonomia/>

- **Koko**, a free online **mental health service** is facing scrutiny after its co-founder revealed the company used a popular **AI chatbot program**, called **GPT-3**, to provide mental health support to 4,000 users, without telling them the answers weren't coming from a human. Company owner Robert Morris maintained that, while audiences rated AI co-authored responses "significantly higher" than human-only answers, they decided to quickly pull the program, stating that once people were made aware of the messages' artificial origins, "it didn't work." He also said that "Simulated empathy feels weird, empty." Although users weren't chatting directly with GPT-3, a "co-pilot" system was designed so that human support workers reviewed the AI's suggested responses, and used them as they deemed relevant.

<https://www.popsoci.com/technology/koko-ai-chatbot-mental-health/>

- **Light pollution** is getting measurably worse, according to results so far from the "**Globe at Night**" citizen science study that has collected more than 51,000 naked-eye human observations of the sky from the ground to supplement the data from satellite images taken of the earth from the sky. Study authors say that at the rate that light pollution has grown, the brightness of the night sky doubles in fewer than eight years — a result of human-caused light pollution. A child born in a place where 250 stars are visible at night would only be able to see 100 of those stars by the age of 18. **Potential health consequences** include disruption of circadian rhythm, disruption of bird and insect activity, which could harm agriculture, and more. The study was sponsored by the National Science Foundation and led by research institutions in Germany and the U.S. It was published in *Science*.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/light-pollution-is-even-worse-than-satellites-show-us/ar-AA16zINO>



- In a small study, Columbia University researchers found that taking a **five minute walk for every 30 minutes of sitting** could offset some of the worst effects of **prolonged sitting**. Each of the 11 adult participants (all in their 40s, 50s, and 60s and most didn't have hypertension or diabetes) could read, work on a laptop, use phones and were provided standardized meals during their 8-hour "workday."

Researchers tested five different exercise "snacks," or short bursts of activity, and recorded blood pressure readings and blood sugar levels. The exercise snacks included: one minute of walking after every 30 minutes of sitting, one minute after 60 minutes; five minutes every 30; five minutes every 60; and no walking. All amounts of walking reduced blood pressure by 4 to 5 millimeters of mercury (mmHg) compared with sitting all day, but the **best results were obtained with the five minute walk every 30 minutes**. The team is now testing 25 different "doses" of walking and exercise with a larger group of people. The study was published in *Medicine and Science in Sports & Exercise*.

<https://www.popsoci.com/health/exercise-sitting-work/>





- Marta Garaulet, physiology and nutrition researcher at the University of Murcia in Spain, studies **meal timing** and its effects on obesity and metabolism. Even in her native Spain, which is famous for its late-eating culture, research has found that people who typically eat a large midday lunch and a light dinner develop fewer metabolic problems than people who consume a lot of nighttime calories. Check out "Eating Lab's" tips on the emerging science of "**chrono-nutrition**," or meal timing.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2023/01/10/meal-timing-big-meals/>

Podcast on Colorectal Cancer

Agng Matters host Cheryl Beversdorf interviewed Priyanka Kanth, MD, Gastroenterologist and Director, Gastrointestinal Cancer Prevention Program, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, about signs and symptoms, risk factors, diagnostic screening, and treatment for **colorectal cancer**, and lifestyle changes to reduce risk. (47 minutes)

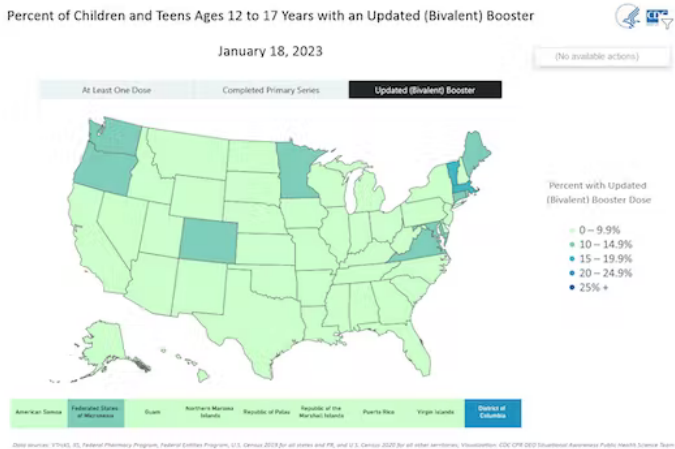
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6Coyc5uiVgSv0Aw1Ggj9Z3>

Influenza and Covid-19 News

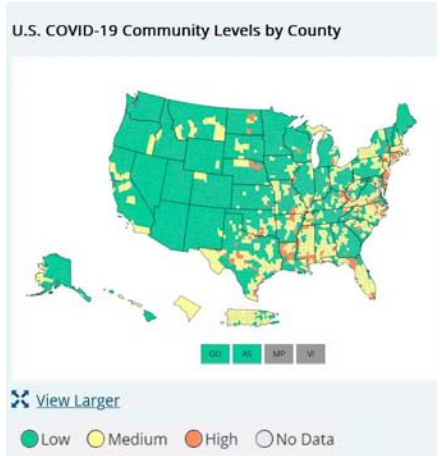
Seasonal influenza activity continues to **decline** across the country, with only seven states reporting high flu activity. The percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza (4.6%) in clinical laboratories declined compared to the previous week. 99% of positive specimens were for Influenza type A, and only .7% of specimens tested positive for Influenza type B.

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm>

Uptake for the new **bivalent Covid-19 booster** vaccine, which targets the original and the newer Omicron variant, has been slow, with only 15.3% of Americans getting the booster since it became available in September. For children and teens age 12 to 17 years, less than 9.9% have received the vaccine, and less than 7% of those under 12 have received it. It's not until the age category of over 50 that the uptake rate goes over 20% on average. For adults over 65, the vaccination rate for the bivalent booster is about 25%.



Covid rates are decreasing. Two weeks ago, 62% of counties had "high" or "medium" community levels of Covid-19 as of January 5, 2023. As of January 19, 2023, **just 37.5%** had "high" or "medium" Community Levels.



3
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