

## WELLNESS

**In the News****Catch up on the latest wellness-related developments from the past month.****Heart Attacks No Longer the Leading Cause of Heart-related Deaths**

According to a [recent report](#) published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, heart attack deaths decreased by 89% from 1970 to 2022. Heart attacks are severe ischemic heart disease events that limit blood flow to and from the heart. The report does not indicate that heart attacks are occurring less, but rather that emergency physicians have become better at saving heart attack patients with the help of contemporary medications, life-saving procedures and medical devices.

While heart attack-related deaths are down, the report found that there has been a significant increase in arrhythmia-related deaths. Arrhythmias are disorders that impact the rate at which the heart beats. They most often occur when the heart beats too slowly (bradycardia), when the heart beats too fast (tachycardia), when the heartbeat begins in the ventricles (ventricular arrhythmia) or when the heartbeat begins above the ventricles (supraventricular arrhythmia). Arrhythmias are common and can be harmless; however, they can be fatal if they interfere with the heart's ability to maintain blood flow.

While genetics are often a factor in heart health, there are lifestyle factors that put people at a higher risk for heart-related issues, such as diets that are high in trans fats, cholesterol and sodium; physical

inactivity; smoking; excessive alcohol consumption; being overweight or obese; and insufficient sleep. Reach out to a health care professional if you have questions or concerns about your heart health.

**Cancer Deaths Decrease in United States, Expected to Increase Globally**

Cancer is predicted to be the leading cause of death worldwide by 2050, despite declining rates of cancer deaths in the United States, according to a new report from the [American Cancer Society](#). Over the past 30 years, cancer deaths have decreased by 34% in the country, and cancer deaths in the United States account for only 7% of global cancer deaths. The report suggests that this small percentage is due to the country's dedication to cancer screenings and treatment efforts.

Even though cancer deaths in the United States are decreasing, it is still one of the leading causes of death, along with heart disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cancer and heart disease are the top two causes of death in the country. The report from the American Cancer Society also highlights that there are significant racial and geographic disparities in cancer outcomes due to cost, inadequate insurance, and limited access to early detection and treatment. This impacts Black Americans, Native Americans and Alaska Natives, who tend to experience worse

outcomes. People living in rural areas and southern states are also more likely to die from cancer due to poverty and obesity, as well as less access to screening and cancer specialists.

According to the report, the top risk factors for cancer worldwide are tobacco use, alcohol consumption, excess body weight, ultraviolet radiation, environmental pollutants, reproductive and hormonal factors and occupational exposures. The report highlights the importance of prevention and early detection for better outcomes.

Contact your health care provider to understand your personal risk factors, potential vaccinations for cancer prevention and recommended cancer screenings.

### COVID-19 Variant Causing Painful New Symptom

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) reported that a new COVID-19 variant, NB.1.8.1, is on the rise. This variant, commonly known as Nimbus, is often accompanied by a symptom referred to as “razor blade throat.”

Nimbus is a subvariant of Omicron, the dominant COVID-19 variant since late 2021. Omicron variants have been known to cause more throat pain than the virus’s earlier forms. One possible explanation is that as the virus evolves, so does the body’s response to it. A sore throat may not be from the virus itself but an inflammatory reaction to it.

Cases of the Nimbus variant in the United States are still relatively low but could lead to a surge in cases in the next couple of months, according to Matthew S. Kelly, MD, MPH, the chief of infectious diseases in the Pediatrics Department at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Kelly suggests that now is a good time to take precautions, which may vary depending on your age and health status.

The WHO is also monitoring an emerging variant called XFG. It has a low immediate risk but shows signs of being able to grow and potentially

spread more easily than other circulating variants. According to experts, it’s too early to know what its health consequences may be.

If you are experiencing a sore throat, it is recommended that you take an at-home COVID-19 test. Other common COVID-19 symptoms include fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, congestion or runny nose, new loss of taste or smell, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If the test is positive, contact your health care provider for further guidance. If your sore throat is severe, you may still want to check with your doctor to get tested for other illnesses, such as strep throat.

Stay tuned for more wellness-related news and developments.