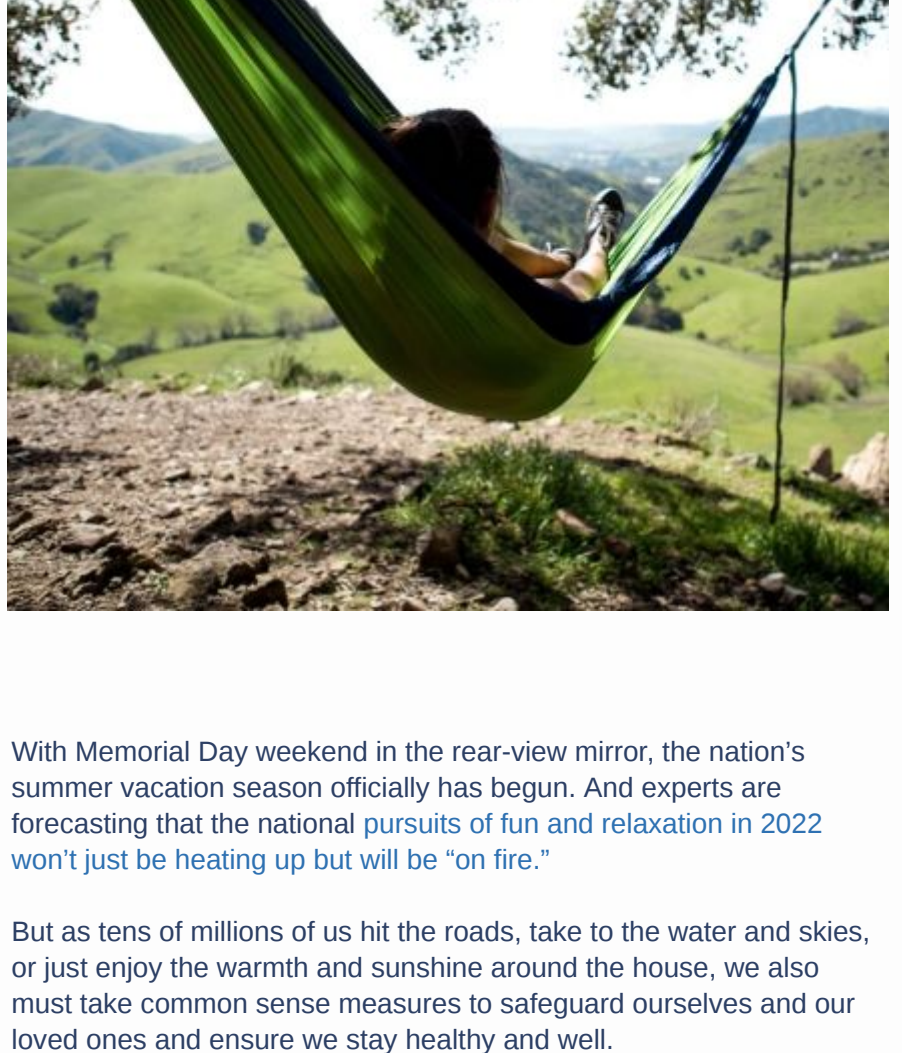


Better Healthcare Newsletter from Patrick Malone



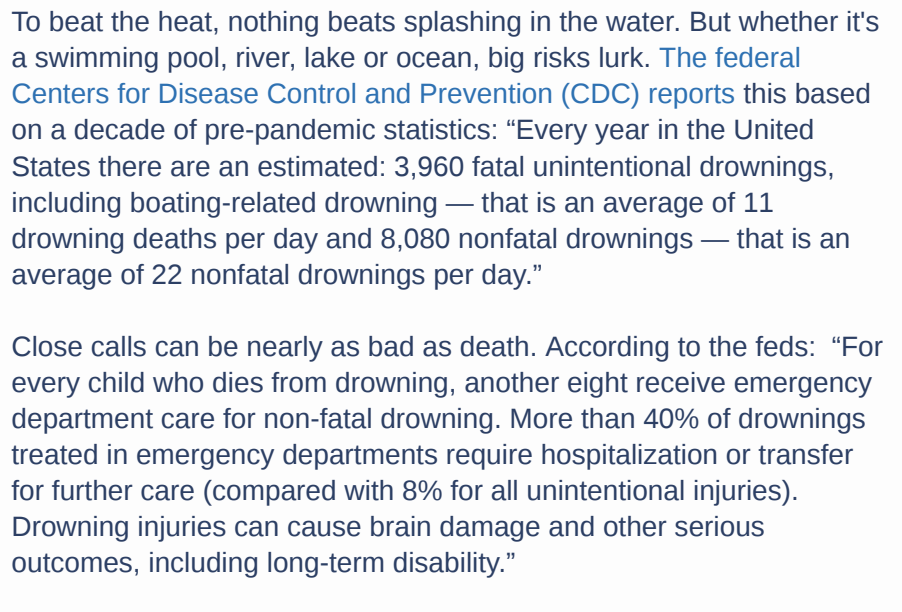
With Memorial Day weekend in the rear-view mirror, the nation's summer vacation season officially has begun. And experts are forecasting that the national pursuits of fun and relaxation in 2022 won't just be heating up but will be "on fire."

But as tens of millions of us hit the roads, take to the water and skies, or just enjoy the warmth and sunshine around the house, we also must take common sense measures to safeguard ourselves and our loved ones and ensure we stay healthy and well.

A little caution can go a long way.

So let's focus on the harms posed by common pests, dangerous infections, and risky home projects. (Click on the hyperlinks scattered below for more information.) Here's hoping this handful of precautions proves so helpful to you and yours that you stay healthy through the summer, the year, and far beyond!

1. Keep splashy summer fun and safe



To beat the heat, nothing beats splashing in the water. But whether it's a swimming pool, river, lake or ocean, big risks lurk. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports this based on a decade of pre-pandemic statistics: "Every year in the United States there are an estimated 3,950 fatal unintentional drownings, including boating-related drowning — that is an average of 11 drowning deaths per day and 8,080 nonfatal drownings — that is an average of 22 nonfatal drownings per day."

Close calls can be nearly as bad as death. According to the feds: "For every child who dies from drowning, another eight receive emergency department care for non-fatal drowning. More than 40% of drownings treated in emergency departments require hospitalization or transfer for further care (compared with 6% for all unintentional injuries). Drowning injuries can cause brain damage and other serious outcomes, including long-term disability."

The Red Cross says three key steps can be life-changing and -saving: "Ensure every member of your family learns to swim so they at least achieve skills of water competency; able to enter the water, get a breath, stay afloat, change position, swim a distance then get out of the water safely. Employ layers of protection including barriers to prevent access to water, life jackets, and close supervision of children to prevent drowning. Know what to do in a water emergency — including how to help someone in trouble in the water safely, call for emergency help and [provide] CPR."

The nonprofit safety group offers robust resources on its site [click here to access] for water safety, including a handy link to find youngsters' swim lessons (which should start early). The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission also provides helpful information [click here] on how to keep swimming pools and spas safer for all.

2. Enjoy sun and heat — in moderation and while watching out for the vulnerable

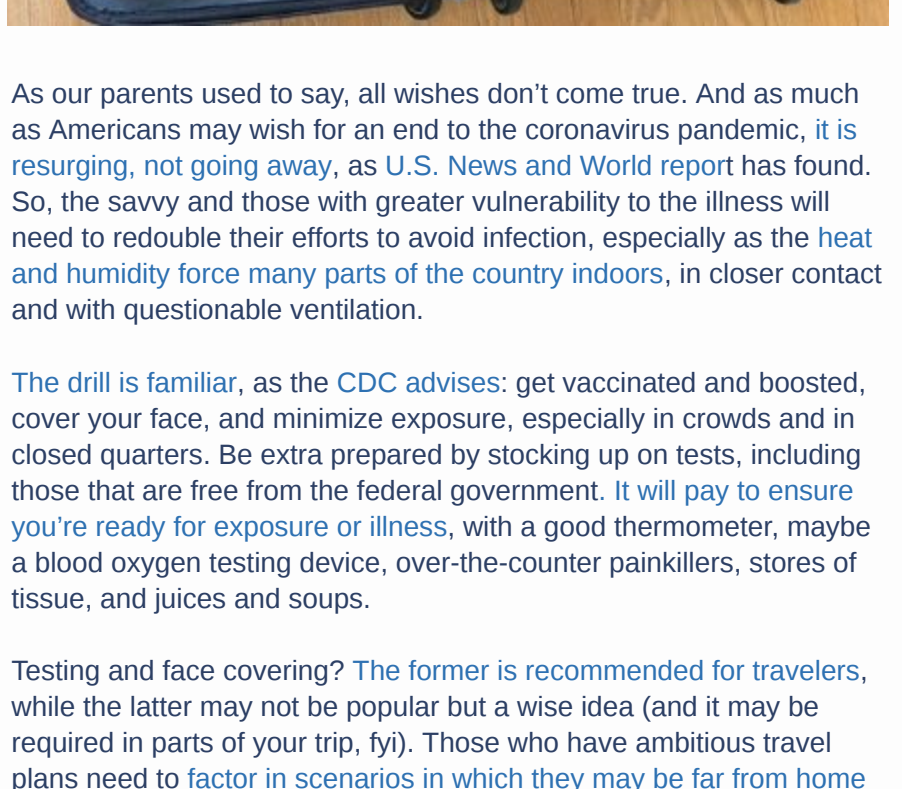


After months of gray and cold, lots of us want to bask in the summer sun. Don't overdo it, though. The CDC reports that: "Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States ... An examination of ... data suggests that each year, about 4.3 million adults are treated for basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas at a cost of about \$4.8 billion." While sunshine can provide healthful Vitamin D and boost the spirit, outdoor lovers also should stay in the shade, keep covered up, don hats and sunglasses, and wear appropriate screens to protect themselves from harmful rays.

That summer warmth can turn problematic or even deadly — fast. This is especially true as the weather gets more extreme due to climate change. CDC experts report this: "Heat-related deaths and illnesses are preventable. Despite this, around 618 people in the United States are killed by extreme heat every year ... Heat-related illnesses, like heat exhaustion or heat stroke, happen when the body is not able to properly cool itself. While the body normally cools itself by sweating, during extreme heat, this might not be enough. In these cases, a person's body temperature rises faster than it can cool itself down. This can cause damage to the brain and other vital organs. Older adults, the very young, and people with mental illness and chronic diseases are at highest risk. However, even young and healthy people can be affected if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather."

Heat disorders, including cramps, exhaustion, stroke, and rhabdomyolysis (a tissue- and organ-damaging condition), can be serious and deadly. They are preventable, the CDC says. When temperatures soar, take it easy. Stay hydrated and indoors during peak heat periods. Protect yourself from the sun, taking care to time activities in cooler parts of the day. Please safeguard kids and older adults when it gets hot, checking in on them and other vulnerable groups to ensure they are well and taking needed steps to be well. That goes for the pets, too. Make it part of your summer routine to double check that neither kids nor four-footed pals get left in a vehicle in the heat.

3. With coronavirus pandemic surging, take precautions and plan trips with care

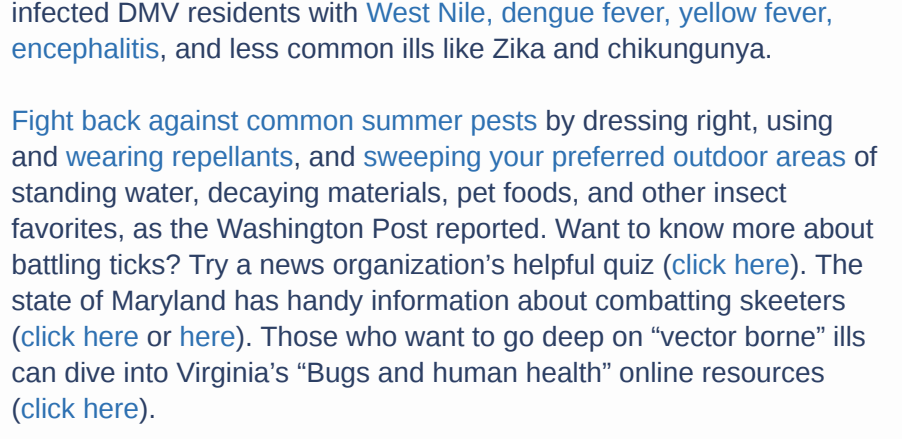


As our parents used to say, all wishes don't come true. And as much as Americans may wish for an end to the coronavirus pandemic, it is resurging, not going away, as U.S. News and World report has found. So, the savvy and those with greater vulnerability to the illness will need to redouble their efforts to avoid infection, especially as the heat and humidity force many parts of the country indoors, in closer contact and with questionable ventilation.

The drill is familiar, as the CDC advises: get vaccinated and boosted, cover your face, and minimize exposure, especially in crowds and in closed quarters. Be extra prepared by stocking up on tests, including those that are free from the federal government. It will pay to ensure you're ready for exposure or illness, with a good thermometer, maybe a blood oxygen testing device, over-the-counter painkillers, stores of tissue, and juices and soups.

Testing and face covering? The former is recommended for travelers, while the latter may be popular but a wise idea (and it may be required in parts of your trip, too). Those who have ambitious travel plans need to factor in scenarios in which they may be far from home and needing to find not only testing sites but also coronavirus treatment and spots to stay while quarantining. Sure, you may have snagged a deal on accommodations for that planned trip. But what happens if you must extend your stay and if you can't go dashing about freely because you may be ill? Domestic travelers potentially will have greater access to "test and treat" facilities — pharmacies and clinics that not only can diagnose a coronavirus infection but also offer antivirals like Paxlovid. Those with higher concern about contracting sicklers (click here or here). Those who want to go deep on "vector borne" ills can dive into Virginia's "Bugs and human health" online resources (click here).

4. Don't go buggy fighting seasonal pests



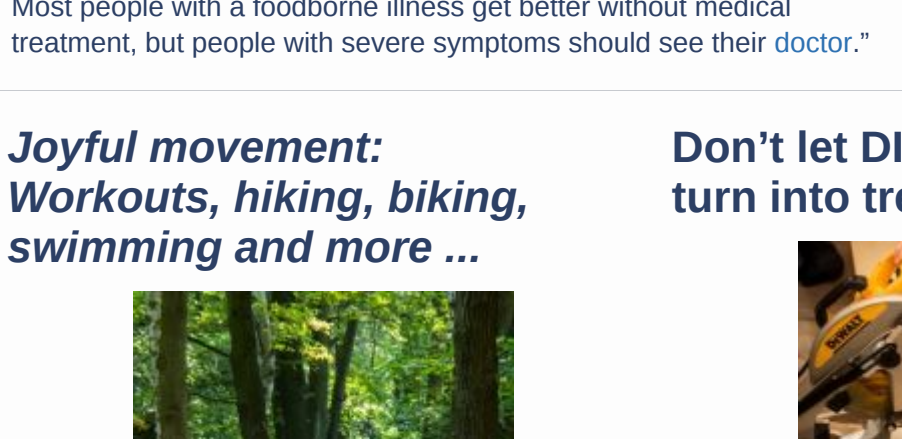
Summer is also prime time for pests with wings, stingers, and biting mouths. With the climate becoming warmer and wetter in the southern part of the country that includes the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, insect experts and others have warned (and I have written about before) us DMV locals to brace for an onslaught of ticks, mosquitoes, flies, and other potentially infection-carrying insects.

Beware, too, of close encounters with snakes, coyotes, and even bears.

The insect pests, as well as disease-carrying animals like deer, chipmunks, and birds, are bringing us not only familiar illnesses like Lyme and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. The bite of a fast-advancing type of tick, for example, is spreading an allergy in many humans to red meat, pork, and chicken, as the Washington Post reported. Mosquitoes in the area, health agencies in the area report, have infected DMV residents with West Nile, dengue fever, yellow fever, encephalitis, and less common ills like Zika and chikungunya.

Fight back against common summer pests by dressing right, using and wearing repellants, and sweeping your preferred outdoor areas of standing water, decaying materials, pet foods, and other insect favorites, as the Washington Post reported. Want to know more about battling ticks? Try a news organization's helpful quiz (click here). The state of Maryland has handy information about combating skeeters (click here or here). Those who want to go deep on "vector borne" ills can dive into Virginia's "Bugs and human health" online resources (click here).

5. When preparing, serving, and storing food, there's no season to relax on safety



For any food you prepare and serve this summer, especially outdoors but also inside: keep in mind the quartet of key safety steps CDC officials emphasize: cleanliness, separation of raw and ready-to-eat items to avoid cross-contamination, cooking to correct temperatures, and refrigerating perishable goods, pronto.

The numbers of preventable injuries are staggering: federal experts estimate that each year 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die.

As the CDC has reported, scientists have identified more than 250 foodborne diseases, most of them "infections, caused by a variety of bacteria, viruses, and parasites." And "harmful toxins and chemicals also can contaminate foods and cause foodborne illness," the CDC says.

The federal experts also warn: "Common symptoms of foodborne diseases are nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and diarrhea. However, symptoms may differ among the different types of foodborne diseases. Symptoms can sometimes be severe, and some foodborne illnesses can even be life-threatening. Although anyone can get a foodborne illness, some people are more likely to develop one. Those groups include: Older adults, young children, people with immune systems weakened from medical conditions, such as diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease, organ transplants, or HIV/AIDS, or from receiving chemotherapy or radiation treatment, and pregnant women. Most people with a foodborne illness get better without medical treatment, but people with severe symptoms should see their doctor."

Joyful movement: Workouts, hiking, biking, swimming and more ...



If the pandemic packed on a few pounds that need to be shed, or if the summer is as good a time as any to get more fit. (Yes, you promised at the new year to do this ...) But don't make it a big deal. Try to have fun.

The New York Times, for example, has posted an eight-minute workout showcasing a half-dozen easy participants joy and enhance their mood (click here to learn more).

The summer runner's calendar, of course, is jammed with events (click here to learn more) and this is true for master swimmers, too (click here for more information).

To clear your head, trek among nature's seasonal splendors in the DC area's showcase formal gardens (click here to learn more). Or take a stroll around the National Gallery gardens and then take in a Friday night jazz performance (click here for more information).

Maryland tourism officials have lots of resources online about the hundreds of miles of water trails that can be toured by paddlers. In Virginia, state officials have posted a nifty guide to family bike rides (click here to learn more). If man's feathered friends tickle your fancy, get out there and check out the varied species of birds that local watchers adore (click here to learn more).

Remember, it's the sedentary life that can get harmful to your health, so even when it gets summer steamy, it's important to find ways to keep moving. The nation's capital and environs, of course, offer nonpareil ways to get in those 10,000 steps indoors, in air conditioned comfort at a dazzling array of museums with collections to see for all tastes (click here to get more information).

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BY THE NUMBERS

58% Percent of survey respondents who said they will skip 2022 summer vacations due to: lack of interest (27%), concern about the pandemic (20%), or preferring to go at another time (13%). Experts say time off is vital to people, allowing them needed rest and time to recharge.

\$15.6 billion Federal estimate of annual cost to the country of foodborne illnesses. A third of these illnesses were tracked to problems with chicken (12%), pork (10%) and beef (9%), with fruits and vegetables (row crops) blamed in 17% of cases.

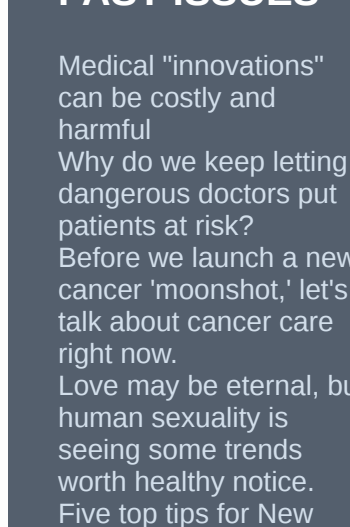
\$3,000 Estimated average cost for one visit for Emergency Room care for serious or complex injury or condition. ER treatment is among the most expensive hospital services offer. It is typically 5x the price of urgent care, which has an estimated average \$150-\$200/single visit cost.

51% Percentage of traffic fatalities in which motorists or passengers failed to wear seat belts.

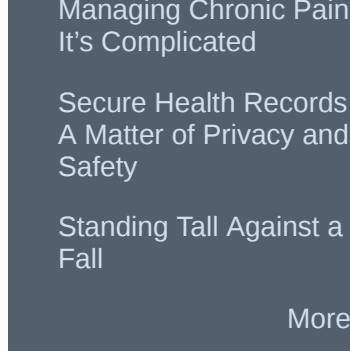
1 in 5 Latest U.S. estimate of how many Americans may be afflicted with long Covid. This means symptoms lasting for months or longer after initial coronavirus infection, with problems in the heart, lungs and kidneys. Also targets for lingering Covid: blood circulation, the musculoskeletal and endocrine systems, as well as gastrointestinal conditions, neurological problems, and psychiatric symptoms.

QUICK LINKS

- Our firm's website
- Read an excerpt from Patrick Malone's book: The life you save
- Nine Steps to Finding the Best Medical Care and Avoiding the Worst



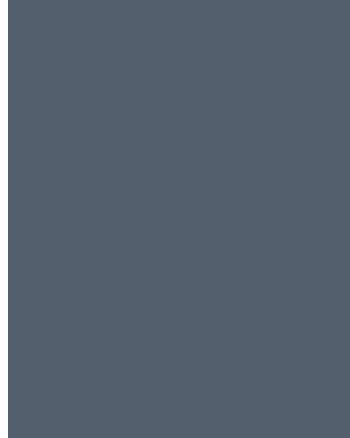
Read our Patient Safety Blog, which has news and practical advice from the frontlines of medicine for how to become a smarter, healthier patient.



PAST ISSUES

- Medical "innovations" can be costly and harmful
- Why do we keep letting dangerous doctors put patients at risk?
- Before we launch a new cancer "moonshot," let's talk about cancer care right now.
- Love may be eternal, but human sexuality is seeing some trends worth healthy notice.
- Five top tips for New Year's health, diet, and fitness resolutions that really work.
- You Can Eat This... But Why Would You?
- Looking Ahead: Preparing for Long-Term Care
- Managing Chronic Pain: It's Complicated
- Secure Health Records: A Matter of Privacy and Safety
- Standing Tall Against a Fall
- More...

Don't let DIY home projects turn into treks to the ER



With more of us spending more time than ever around our homes and real estate purchase prices soaring, the temptation may be huge for DIYers to tackle increasingly ambitious projects, especially because they can't readily find hired help.

But a recent analysis of federal data provides a strong warning on the perils of home improvement projects, as the Washington Post reported:

"[T]he percentage of ER visits related to home-improvement projects in 2020 was the highest in a decade and spiked in early spring that year, leading with April at 4.09%, followed by May and June. The lowest percentage was in January 2020 at 1.9% ... more than 290,000 home-improvement injuries required an ER visit, and more than 24,000 required a hospital stay in 2020. The study doesn't reveal exactly which projects cause the most injuries, but it revealed the most common types of injuries, the most commonly injured body parts and the tools that caused the most injuries. The most dangerous projects for homeowners include redoing bathroom plumbing, fixing roof shingles, and replacing electrical panels ..."

Safety experts long have warned DIYers about the need for extra care and training when clambering on ladders and using power tools. Federal experts have reported that in a single typical year "more than 500,000 people are treated and about 300 people die from ladder-related injuries."

Cuts, gashes, broken bones, and head injuries are all too common byproducts of home projects gone wrong. Know your limits, don't think that watching online videos substitutes for expertise, and do a little cost analysis about how expensive emergency or urgent care or even hospitalization can be versus saving a few bucks on that household annoyance.

Recent Health Care Blog Posts

Here are some recent posts on our patient safety blog that might interest you:

- Experts fear the country is veering dangerously into a widespread acceptance of mass death as just a regular part of life — not only by moving on with little more than a faint acknowledgement of more than 1 million coronavirus pandemic fatalities but also with a tragic resignation about fatal shootings at schools, groceries, movie theaters, and other public places. It has been chilling to watch the "new normal" of the public: reactions to a racist shooting that killed 10 in Buffalo, N.Y., grocery, and the slaughter of 19 children and two adults at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, with destructive disinformation spreading, public officials fatally bungling, and political partisanship calcifying apathy.
- Doctors and hospitals must redouble their efforts to protect patients in their care, as the coronavirus pandemic reversed years of safety advances, and these must be restored top to bottom — and more. This powerful, timely argument has been made in a top medical journal by leading federal regulators at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- The social media sites that young folks so adore also have turned into virtual illicit drug bazaars, helping to explain the exploding problems with the powerful synthetic painkiller fentanyl and why opioids and overdoses of them have become a leading killer of Americans ages 18 to 45. During the coronavirus pandemic, especially, and continuing onward, Snapchat, TikTok, and other social media apps, including those that allow users to swap encrypted or disappearing messages, have helped to fuel a burgeoning market in Percocet, Xanax, and other prescription pills, the New York Times has reported. Authorities have warned that those drugs by themselves would be hugely problematic but criminal dealers also have taken to trading their wares with fentanyl — an easily manufactured opioid that requires only minute doses to provide a big kick, fast addiction, and too easy death.
- Federal regulators say they soon will ban the manufacture, distribution, and retail and wholesale selling of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, an action expected to take effect in a year or two and which anti-smoking advocates argue could save hundreds of thousands of lives of black and young Americans. The Food and Drug Administration says the best available evidence argues powerfully for its planned ban, which some opponents have flipped as risky for one of the biggest groups that its researchers say will benefit: African Americans.
- Even with budget-busting gas prices, Americans are driving with abandon, especially as the nation heads into the summer vacation season. But what will get motorists to slow down, buckle up, and heed vital road safety steps — especially as the latest new numbers to underscore the lethal toll if they don't? Traffic fatalities climbed by 10% last year versus the year before, busting the percentage increase record in such deaths since federal officials started keeping their tallies in 1975, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has found. The Washington Post reported that the 42,915 fatalities in 2021 were a the highest such number nationwide since 2005. The spiking road toll also carried [a] grim outcome for pedestrians, a leading road safety group reported.
- Americans kept suffering the dire consequences of corporations' relentless pursuit of profits, their stifling of beneficial competition, and their failure to secure the production of their products. These now include desperately needed, specialized baby formula and contrast dyes used in diagnostic imaging studies for seriously ill and injured patients. A special place in perdition needs to be reserved for those who have put infants at risk of hunger and illness by allowing the feeding crisis to explode and for boos who are rushing in with finger-snapping, fact-light, and unworkable actions for parents to respond.

HERE'S TO A HEALTHY 2022!

Sincerely, Patrick Malone

Patrick Malone & Associates