



# HealthNet News

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## A Bump on the Head: No Laughing Matter

A new bill (HB 5141) could bring Connecticut up to the standards that most states already provide to protect child athletes from concussions.

The Act would require operators of youth athletic activities using public athletic fields to follow concussion protocols “substantially similar” to those currently used for intramural and interscholastic athletic activities. The bill includes an immunity provision, however, which would exempt coaches and parents involved in youth sports to avoid repercussions if they did not follow the protocols. Read more about it in the Connecticut Mirror at <http://ctviewpoints.org/2016/03/18/concussion-struggle/>

### Inside this issue:

Concussion Resources	1-4
Nutrition Dilemmas	4
Wolfram-Alpha	5
Helpings Seniors in Debt	6
Poison Triage App	7
Mental Health Service Locator	8
Finding Summer Camps	9

Those of us brought up on a diet of Saturday morning cartoons might have chuckled at the sight of Wile E. Coyote plunging head first to the bottom of a canyon after being duped...again...by Roadrunner. But the truth is a bump on the head is not a laughing matter. Just this week, the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) published a study which found that a single, mild concussion can triple the ordinary adult’s risk of suicide; sports concussions occurring over the weekend boosted that risk to four times the population average (Fralick, Thiruchelvam, Tien, & Redelmeier, 2016). This risk was not dependent on a previous psychiatric diagnosis, and increased with additional concussions. The connection between concussions and suicide is not yet understood. However, the study’s authors feel there are two more likely explanations. First, concussions cause brain injuries, like inflammation, from which the patient does not fully recover. Second, the patient does not give himself enough time to recover before returning to his regular schedule setting himself up for frustration and disappointment. Frustration and disappointment may in turn lead to depression and potentially suicide. Craig Bryan, a psychologist at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, reports that concussion seems to increase our risk for sleep disturbances, depression, and decision-making problems; all of which are considered risk factors for suicide (Bryan & Clemans, 2013).

The CMAJ study looked at average adults engaged in everyday activities like changing light bulbs, taking the laundry down to the basement, or driving a car. The study participants were not NFL stars like the Denver Bronco’s linebacker Shaquil Barrett or Carolina Panther’s Corey “Philly” Brown, who both suffered concussions and did not return to the field in Super Bowl 50. According to sports journalist, Hannah Albarazi of the San Francisco Bay CBS news affiliate, KCBS (<http://tinyurl.com/zjo2ubd>) concussion incidents are at a four-year high. The NFL’s 2015 season saw 271 players suffer concussions up from 31.6 percent from 2014. New safety measures which the NFL recently added to their concussion protocol may have resulted in more concussions being diagnosed. These measures include unaffiliated neurological trauma consultants on the sideline and spotters in the press box. Medical personnel are also able to call a timeout if the on-field staff misses a possible head injury.

Continued next page

## A Bump on the Head: No Laughing Matter, continued

Despite the high risk for serious injuries to their players, professional football is not going to be replaced by competitive yoga anytime soon. The sport is too entrenched in American culture. According to an Associated Press poll, 44 percent of parents said they are uncomfortable letting their child play football. The same percentage were uncomfortable with ice hockey; 45 percent were uncomfortable with wrestling. However, only five percent said they have discouraged their children from playing these sports. (<http://ap-gfkpoll.com/featured/our-latest-poll-findings-37>). Perhaps parents feel the self-confidence, or life lessons children learn by participating in organized sports is more important than their risk of injury on the playing field. Here is some good news. There is a simple vision test which parents can administer on the sidelines to help them determine when a player may have a concussion.

Vision tests can say a lot about brain function. According to researchers at New York University's Langone Concussion Center, the King-Devick vision test offers parents and coaches a protocol for deciding when to remove an athlete from the game (Galetta et al., 2015). The timed vision test involves rapidly reading slightly jumbled lines of numbers off of three cards as quickly as possible. The test is administered to athletes before the playing season for a baseline time. Following a head injury, the athlete reads the cards again. On average, concussed athletes take 4.8 seconds longer to complete the King-Devick test. The Langone researchers found the King-Devick test correctly identified 86 percent of concussions, as confirmed by medical diagnosis. The test has been used to accurately diagnose concussions in athletes as young as five years old.

The Youth Sports Safety Alliance offers guidelines for assuring the safety of high school aged athletes. Their "National Action Plan" identifies specific steps schools, parents, and policy makers can take to minimize or eliminate the risk of catastrophic or fatal injuries and illnesses in these four areas:

- Cardiac Events
- Neurologic Injuries
- Environmental/Exertional Conditions
- Dietary/Substance-Induced Conditions

Their recommendations focus on providing athletes with proper equipment, health care professionals, and a safe environment.

Here are some resources for educating parents, coaches, and athletes about how to recognize concussions, and make organized sports safer for children. Ordinary adults may also want to consult them before they change their next lightbulb.

### American Academy of Neurology

The Academy offers a Sports Concussion Resources center on their website ([www.aan.com/concussion](http://www.aan.com/concussion))

Resources include:

- Concussion Quick Check apps and reference sheet
- Evidence-based guidelines summaries for physicians, parents and athletes, and coaches and trainers
- Free online concussion training for coaches
- Sports concussion state laws
- General information about traumatic brain injury

Continued next page

# A Bump on the Head: No Laughing Matter, continued

## **American Academy of Pediatrics**

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

General information for parents about concussions including guidance on treatment and prevention, and when it is safe for an athlete to return to play.

## **Brain Injury Association**

[www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)

800-444-6443

Brain injury prevention, research, education, and advocacy.

Excellent brochure dispelling the myths of concussion. Learn the signs of a concussion and how to correctly respond.

## **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**

HEADS UP Program (www. <http://www.cdc.gov/headsup>)

Site offers information and resources to help you recognize, respond to, and minimize the risk of concussion or other serious brain injury. Separate entry points (portals) for parents, coaches, school professionals, and health care providers. The parent's page includes general information about concussions; action plans, quick facts wallet size card, and a free app to help parents spot a possible concussion and what to do if you think your child or teen has a concussion or other serious brain injury. The site also offers many customizable info graphics to increase awareness about concussion.

## **KidsHealth**

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

Three different entry points offering information written specifically for parents, teens, and younger children about concussion. The teen page covers signs and symptoms of concussion, what teens should do, and what will happen with sports and school. Includes videos. Visitors can read or listen to information. Information can be translated into Spanish.

## **National Action Plan for Sports Safety**

[www.youthsportssafetyalliance.org](http://www.youthsportssafetyalliance.org)

Founded by the National Athletic Trainers' Association. The organization urges schools to adopt safety measures to protect students from injury or illness that mainly occur in four major areas: cardiac events, neurologic injuries, environmentally-induced conditions, and dietary/substance-induced conditions. Their National Action Plan provides policymakers with guidelines for making sports programs safer for young athletes. Annual Youth summit, consensus statements, and newsletters.

Continued next page

# A Bump on the Head: No Laughing Matter, continued

## Articles:

*A Simple Flashcard Test to Detect Concussions.* Reynolds, Gretchen. New York Times. March 11, 2015.

*Adding Vision to Concussion Testing: A Prospective Study of Sideline Testing in Youth and Collegiate Athletes.* Galetta, KM, et al. J Neuro-Ophthalmology 2015; 35:235-241.

*Risk of suicide after a concussion.* Fralick M et al. CMAJ 2016; online Feb 8, 2016.

## Books:

*The Ghost in My Brain: How a Concussion Stole My Life and How the New Science of Brain Plasticity Helped Me Get it Back.* Clark Elliott. ISBN 0525426566.

*Coping with Concussion and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: A Guide to Living with the Challenges Associated with Post-Concussion Syndrome and Brain Trauma.* Diane Roberts Stoler and Barbara Albers Hill. ISBN 1583334769.

*Conquering Concussion.* Mary Lee Esty. ISBN 0965342506.

## Finding Answers to Nutrition Dilemmas



Have you ever lay awake in bed worrying about whether the calcium supplements you take to protect your bones might actually cause a heart attack? Maybe your nutritional conundrum is whether you should give up luncheon meat in your sandwich because of its cancer risk. Or perhaps you're recalling news story about how your heartburn remedy has been linked to osteoporosis and kidney disease. Confusing headlines about nutrition advice is enough to make you consider a hunger strike!

Well, here's the good news. You can nix the hunger strike. Instead, become a regular visitor to the website, *NutritionFacts.org*.

*NutritionFacts.org* was created by physician and author, Michael Greger, MD, FACLM, as a resource you and your doctor can consult to make sense of the latest peer-reviewed nutrition and health research. Dr. Greger specializes in easy to understand, "bite-sized" videos and news stories of important discoveries and trending or controversial topics in nutrition. The day I visited his website, the featured topics included eating for happiness, the Paleo diet, boosting immune function with produce, sodium guidelines, and countering the inflammation of aging.

NutritionFacts is a strictly non-commercial, science-based public service. What is Dr. Greger's motivation? Eating well can actually prevent or reverse killer diseases, like diabetes and heart disease. But sadly, nutrition is not sexy, nor is it highly profitable. New drugs or surgical devices capture much of the headlines and news coverage because, sadly, they generate lots of money for the companies that make them. And, sadder still, physicians receive very little in the way of nutrition education in medical school.

So, toss and turn no more. Instead, grab a cup of coffee or tea and logon to NutritionFacts.org for the real scoop. You can also sign up for free, daily, email updates on nutrition topics. Just one word of caution. Dr. Greger talks REALLY fast. You may have to watch/listen to his videos several times before you catch everything.

# Get Your Inner Data Geek On!



Do you love to amaze your friends and family with trivia? If so, WolframAlpha has you covered! You can translate phrases into Morse Code, produce the nutritional profile for ten peanut M&Ms, and find out how many movies feature the same two actors, and much, much more. WolframAlpha describes itself as a “computational knowledge engine,” not a search engine. It uses a vast store of expert-level knowledge to compute answers to your questions and provide data and analysis on any topic, whether it is the human heart, or the Golden Gate Bridge. Search engines, by contrast, index web pages then look for text matches, and give you a list of links to follow.

At HealthNet, we are health information geeks. So, we were excited to see that in addition to entering your topic or desired calculation in the WolframAlpha search box, you can also explore broad categories, including Health and Medicine, Food and Nutrition, and Life Sciences. You can use WolframAlpha to generate a nutrition label for your favorite granola. The cereal package gives you data for  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup, but you probably eat four times that amount at breakfast. No problem. WolframAlpha can calculate the calories, fat, sugar, etc. you are actually consuming. WolframAlpha also compares yoga poses letting you see the difference in muscles used, and lets you know how long it will take to lose those extra five pounds from Christmas if you spend your evenings on the sofa watching TV. You can also generate growth charts for your children, estimate due dates, find out how popular your baby name choice is, calculate target heart rates, and estimate your blood alcohol levels. With regards to blood alcohol levels, realize that WolframAlpha estimates how inebriated you are. Never use it as the basis for deciding whether you are fit to drive home from the bar.

What are you curious about? Go forth and explore with WolframAlpha! The website for WolframAlpha is [www.wolframalpha.com](http://www.wolframalpha.com).



# Help for Seniors with Debt Problems



Do you know an older adult who is struggling to make ends meet? Perhaps he is splitting pills. Maybe she is forgoing needed home or car repairs. Or, maybe she is skipping meals. None of these are optimal for an older person's health. An annual survey of state and community organizations serving older adults (<https://www.ncoa.org/wp-content/uploads/USA15-Full-Report-FINAL.pdf>) found medical, credit card, mortgage and utility debt to be common problems. Medical debt affected over 90 percent of seniors served. A consumer finance survey conducted by the Federal Reserve Board found household debt among senior-headed households has increased from 50.2 percent in 2001 to 60.1 percent in 2013 (<http://www.federalreserve.gov/econresdata/scf/scfindex.htm>).

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) offers a range of tools to help older adults manage their debt. These include:

**EconomicCheckUp**® is a free online service which helps seniors improve their economic security by learning how to manage their budgets, safely cut expenses, use their home equity, find work, and set financial goals. Learn more at [www.ncoa.org/resources/economiccheckup](http://www.ncoa.org/resources/economiccheckup).

**BenefitsCheckUp**® is a free online service to screen seniors with limited income for benefits. It covers over 2,000 public and private benefits programs from all 50 states and Washington DC. Many of these programs are undersubscribed by older adults. NCOA notes that collectively these programs could be worth more than \$12,000 and would double the income of someone living at the federal poverty level. Learn more at [www.benefitscheckup.org/?\\_ga=1.268261646.1054413922.1455655731](http://www.benefitscheckup.org/?_ga=1.268261646.1054413922.1455655731).

**SavvySavingSeniors**® is an educational program which helps older adults learn how to budget, avoid scams, apply for benefits, and manage prepaid debit cards to remain financially secure. Learn more at [www.ncoa.org/SavvySeniors](http://www.ncoa.org/SavvySeniors).

**Senior Community Service Employment Program** is a program funded through the U.S. Department of Labor for seniors who want or need to remain in the workforce. The program matches low-income older adults (55+) with job training, employment search services, and on-the-job experience working in community service organizations. For most participants, the program leads to permanent employment. Learn more at [www.ncoa.org/SCSEP](http://www.ncoa.org/SCSEP).

Finally, debt counseling, pro bono legal services and other forms of financial assistance may be available in your community. You can find these services through the federal government's *Eldercare Locator* ([www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)) or through Connecticut's Department of Social Services website, *MyPlaceCT* ([www.myplacect.org](http://www.myplacect.org)).

# App Puts Poison Control Center at Your Fingertips



These days, many of us hold our lives in our hands. Our smartphones manage our schedules, connect us to others, and answer our questions. What would we do if our preschooler swallowed our antihistamine tablets thinking they were M&Ms? What if your grandfather doubled up on his medication because he missed a dose? Being old school, I would open my address book and find the number for my local poison control center (the magnet does not stick to my stainless steel refrigerator). But my daughter or son? I think they might consult Google.

Poison control centers from several states collaborated with the National Capital Poison Center in Washington, DC to put expert help in the palm of your hand. The app's designers realized that people are using their phones to look up possible dangerous exposures and wanted to offer the public a reputable platform for doing this. The poison app enables you to enter basic information about the victim then go through a series of algorithms (the same ones Poison Control experts use) to determine whether the ingestion or exposure warrants further medical attention. The app can help you decide if it's safe to stay home, or prompt you to call Poison Control or visit an emergency room.

According to *webPOISONCONTROL's* website, often the possible poisons we swallow, inhale, rub on our skin, or inject, are not as toxic as we think they are. Also, the amount we are exposed to is so small that no bad effect is expected. But, if you come in contact with something that is possibly toxic, you should not guess what to do!

*webPOISONCONTROL* does have limitations. Currently, the app only works for **swallowed** substances which are drugs, household products or berries. It does not yet cover flowers, leaves, mushrooms, coins, or food poisoning. The app also deals only with one ingredient (no mixtures); people who are very young (under 6 months of age) or old (over 79); and humans. Don't consult this app for your pet. Toxicity differs between species.

To call **Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222**

An online version of the app is available at <http://webpoisoncontrol.org>

iTunes Link: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id959075009>

Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.navigationarts.mobile.ncpc&hl=en>

Cost: FREE

# Map-Based Treatment Locator for Behavioral Health Services



Website: [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

Are you looking for a therapist, substance-abuse treatment center, or other behavioral health service? Check out SAMHSA's free, online, map-based tool. SAMHSA is the federal government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Visitors to [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov), begin by entering a starting location. Right below the start box is a link to an excellent video tutorial recommended for first time visitors to the website. After watching the video, I entered the zip code for my home town, Wethersfield, CT. Instantly a map appeared with color-coded dots indicating the location of treatment facilities in Central Connecticut. A detailed list of these facilities appeared on the right side of my screen.

A search box in the upper right of the screen allowed me to specify a mileage radius and type of facility or service I needed. After checking the mental health facilities box a drop-down menu appeared allowing me to add additional criteria covering the type of therapy, setting, facility, groups served, and payment options. I selected cognitive/behavioral therapy in an outpatient setting. My selections were confirmed for me. Then, viola! My original list of treatment facilities was narrowed to include just those which met my additional requirements.

Each facility listing includes

- Street address
- Main phone number and intake number
- Website link
- Driving directions
- Distance from my location
- Age groups served
- Special groups served (e.g. LBGT clients, or HIV-positive individuals)
- Languages spoken
- Insurance accepted
- Payment options

The facilities list can be sorted by distance, facility name, city, or phone number. It can be downloaded, emailed (with the option of adding a message), or printed. You can get a street level view of any of the facilities by dragging a person-shaped icon to the colored dot.

SAMHSA also has a widget which you can use to add to the treatment finder to your organization's website.



# Looking for a Summer Camp?



## Finding the Right Summer Camp

Have you lined up a summer camp for your school-aged children yet? Not sure where to start? United Way's 2-1-1-Childcare service can help you find the perfect match for your child's needs and interests. According to 2-1-1 Childcare website, there are over 1000 summer camps in Connecticut. How do you find the right one?

2-1-1 "Child Care" is a free, confidential, statewide service which helps match the requests of parents with child care providers and programs, including summer camps. They offer a database of summer camps which range from recreation programs to specialty camps supporting a variety of needs and interests. Call 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000 to talk to a "Child Care" expert. You can also search the "2-1-1 Child Care" summer camps database yourself at [search.211childcare.org](http://search.211childcare.org).

## How Can We Help?

**HealthNet** offers a variety of services to Connecticut libraries and the communities they support. We offer FREE, customized research on health topics for state residents. We also conduct health literacy training for library staff and the public; and provide article delivery service to residents and health professionals in the state.

Is your community planning a health event? If so, you can invite a **HealthNet** librarian to be part of your event. We can provide you with brochures, bookmarks, or other resources to use at these events, to display at your reference desk or post on your community bulletin board.

Cheers!  
Wendy

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