

# Healthful

# living

From your / Arlington School Nurses

## Issue 2 • Newsletter Contributors

Susan Almquist • Susan Franchi • Carol Howard • Michele O'Toole • Arielle Petti • Amy Volante • Andy Winther



## Celebrating the Achievements

of Mary Eliza Eliza Mahoney, 1845 - 1926



**Mary Mahoney** was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts and attended the Phillip's School in Boston. She worked for 15 years at The New England Hospital for Women and Children as a cook, janitor and nurse's aide before attending their nursing program. Out of 42 students who began the program, she was one of only four students to graduate in 1879. She was the first African American in the country to earn a professional nursing license. Her career lasted for over 40 years. In 1920, she made history again when she became one of the first women to register to vote. Mahoney died of breast cancer at age 80. She was buried in Everett, Massachusetts where a monument stands to honor her legacy.

**National Nurses Day is  
May 6, 2020**

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## A Nurse's Perspective on the Covid-19 Pandemic

by Amy Volante, RN, BSN



I recently connected with a trusted friend and colleague to talk about the Coronavirus pandemic. I am using non-identifying information to write this article. Jordan Fitzpatrick, RN, BSN is a case manager at a 500 bed hospital in the midwest. With over 30 years of nursing experience, including work in critical care and community health, he describes the current health crisis as alarming. "This virus is like nothing we have seen in modern times. It is relentless."

According to Jordan, steps were taken to limit Covid-19 exposure as soon as the first Covid-19 patient was admitted in mid March. Since that day, hundreds of Covid-19 patients have been treated. For the safety of the Covid-19 patients and other patients and staff in the hospital, many steps were taken to limit exposure. Visitors were banned from the hospital. Only members of the healthcare team crucial to the patients' treatment were allowed in the rooms. Case managers were asked to contact patients by phone. If the case manager was unable to reach a patient, a family member would be contacted. This helped to limit the number of people in and out of isolation rooms.

Nurses caring for Covid-19 patients were required to use personal protective equipment (PPE, i.e., masks, gloves and robes), as is standard protocol for patients in isolation. Due to a nationwide shortage of PPE, nurses were instructed to re-use masks and gowns. "A nurse had one mask and one gown per patient, per shift." Instead of discarding masks and gowns after a single use, he or she would save them in a sealed paper bag outside the room to re-use each time he or she entered. Due to the unpredictable length of this pandemic and lack of supplies such as formerly unheard of practices continue.

Another step to limit Covid-19 exposure took place when physical distancing guidelines were instituted statewide. However, the implementation of this plan did not prevent employees from being less than 6 feet apart at all times. Areas like corridors and elevators remained crowded due to the number of employees still present in the hospital. This has improved during the past month as more and more employees were authorized to work from home.

Jordan points out that although these steps were prudent and necessary in the ultimate goal of saving lives, they have had negative consequences too. "With no family members and very few healthcare workers present to support them emotionally, the Covid-19 patients are largely scared and alone as they fight for their lives." Jordan says it is difficult for frontline nurses too. "With faces hidden behind masks, they deliver the highest quality of care with compassion." He adds that every attempt is made to include families through the use of telephones and other technology. "The emotional toll on Covid-19 patients and families is the most tragic aspect of this pandemic. People are dying alone. It is no one's fault. It is just a sad reality."

I asked Jordan if the tension and concern that surfaced when the pandemic first began have decreased over the past month with staff successfully managing the challenges. His answer surprised me: "Not at all. We give the best care possible under the circumstances. That is our job, but anxiety and worry are increasing. Our facility holds about 500 patients. Currently over half are confirmed Covid -19 patients. We normally treat a maximum of 15 critically ill patients in our Intensive Care Unit.

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Today over 70 patients are critically ill on ventilators. Many are dying despite the excellent care they receive. That takes an emotional toll on everyone."

Jordan takes additional precautions when he gets home from work. "I take off my clothes at the door, put them in the washing machine and shower. I cannot risk giving the virus to my family."

Financial concerns are the last consequence we discussed. For weeks the hospital has been providing expensive health care while receiving little payment. Like all businesses that hope to survive, the hospital needs revenue to stay open. In an effort to conserve resources, the hospital is assigning employee furloughs, mandatory suspension from work without pay. This will put additional strain on workers like Jordan, whose families rely on their paychecks. People are desperate to get back to work. Just this week some individuals have protested publicly in an effort to persuade officials to reverse stay-at-home orders.

Jordan's final message is a cautionary one. "With millions of people across the country out of work, there is pressure for businesses and schools to reopen. Clearly, timing is crucial. A return to pre Coronavirus activity too early may cause a resurgence in cases." The United States experienced this outcome in 1918 - 1919 when it was closed in response to the Spanish flu, reopened, and then suffered a second wave of catastrophic illness and death, bringing the death toll to one third the world population and 670,000 United States lives as reported by the CDC. Jordan agrees with scientists and doctors who stress the tenacity of the Coronavirus. He says, "The Covid-19 virus is serious. Stay at home. Lives depend on the choices we make, so it is best to make them wisely."

## ASK THE NURSE • QUESTION OF THE WEEK

**How do I tell if my symptoms are just my allergies or actually COVID-19?**

### Seasonal Allergies and COVID-19

Arielle Petti, R.N., B.S.N.

#### Allergies vs COVID-19

This time of year can be challenging for those who suffer from Springtime seasonal allergies. If their allergies are bad enough, some people feel downright sick. We face a new challenge related to allergies due to the COVID-19 virus this year. It can be difficult to differentiate between allergies and COVID-19, because their symptoms can overlap. One of the most common COVID-19 symptoms, cough, can be seen in both conditions. While the cough is usually dry in COVID-19, the virus has caused a wet cough in some patients. Allergy related coughs may cause a dry or wet cough as well. Below are some of the most common symptoms one could experience with each condition (Note: there are several reports of other less common COVID-19 symptoms from providers on the frontlines of the pandemic):

Seasonal/Environmental Allergies	COVID-19
Runny or stuffy nose	Cough (usually dry but not always)
Sneezing	Fever*
Cough (dry or wet)	Shortness of breath*
Itchy nose, eyes, ears, mouth	Fatigue and weakness*
Watery red eyes	Runny or stuffy nose
Swelling around the eyes	Aches and pains*
Irritated throat	Sore throat*
Occasionally fatigue	Headaches
Headache/sinus headache	Diarrhea, nausea, & vomiting*
Asthmatic symptoms	Loss of smell and/or taste*

\*This symptom is unusual for seasonal allergies

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### So, how do you know if your symptoms are due to allergies or COVID-19?

The only way to know for certain is to be tested for COVID-19. Unfortunately, there still are not enough tests available for everyone with symptoms and, even if one is tested, there have been reports of false negatives. If you have seasonal allergies every Spring, and you develop your typical allergy symptoms at their usual time, it could be allergies. However, because of the nature of this pandemic, patients and providers cannot make this determination based on deductive reasoning or common sense; doing so could potentially risk the life of the symptomatic person and those around him/her. Furthermore, it is possible to simultaneously have seasonal allergies and COVID-19.

### What do I do if I have symptoms?

For any new or unusual symptoms (even if you think or know you have seasonal allergies), especially cough with fever and/or shortness of breath, you should contact your doctor immediately to discuss your symptoms, and behave as if you have COVID-19 by implementing isolation (stay home and separate yourself from others) until your doctor says otherwise. Ask your doctor if other people in your home without symptoms should quarantine because they have been exposed to your symptoms. You can also reach the 24-hour Massachusetts COVID-19 hotline by dialing 2-1-1 on your phone to discuss your symptoms and for current COVID-19 information, resources, and referrals in multiple languages. If you think your symptoms may require immediate medical attention, for example shortness of breath, call the hospital prior to arriving to the ER for instructions. Be sure to put on a face mask or face covering that covers your mouth and nose, and seals around your face as tightly as safely possible before leaving the house. For severe respiratory distress, confusion, or a change in consciousness call 9-1-1.

### If you and your doctor are confident your symptoms are caused by seasonal allergies, here are a few tips to help control your symptoms:

- Limit outdoor activities when pollen counts are high.
- Keep windows closed during pollen season.
- If possible, use central air conditioning with a certified asthma/allergy filter.
- Bathe and shampoo your hair daily before bed.
- Change clothing and consider bathing after being outdoors for an extended period of time.
- Change your pillowcase every night before bed.
- Wash all bedding in hot soapy water once per week.
- Dry all laundry in the dryer, instead of using an outdoor line.
- Wear sunglasses and a hat (to prevent environmental allergen contamination of your eyes and hair).
- Limit time around animals/pets that spend a lot of time outdoors.
- Talk to your doctor about taking a daily over-the-counter antihistamine such as Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra. They must be taken consistently for full effect.
- If you have eye symptoms, talk to your doctor about over-the-counter antihistamine eye drops (sometimes oral antihistamines do not adequately manage eye symptoms).
- For nasal inflammation and stuffiness, talk to your doctor about over-the-counter steroidal nasal sprays.

### Safety FYI

Always check with your doctor before starting any prescription or over-the-counter medicine/supplement/vitamin/holistic product to make sure it is safe and appropriate for you to take.

Antihistamines with the word "D" in the name, such as "Claritin-D", contain a decongestant in addition to an antihistamine. Decongestants are stimulants, therefore taking them with other stimulants, such as many ADHD medications, should be avoided unless otherwise advised by a physician.

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## Amazing Hand Washing Activity

By Andy Winther R.N., B.S.N



How would you like to see how germs like the coronavirus hate soap?

We all know how important hand washing is, especially in this time of the COVID-19, but how does it work?

The corona virus is covered in an outer layer of fat; we want to break down the fat layer to destroy the virus. Imagine trying to wash greasy butter off your hands with no soap. That just wouldn't work; you would just be moving the butter around in your hands. Now, when you add soap, the fat breaks down and you can effectively wash the butter off your hands. Same thing happens with the coronavirus, we need soap to break it down to wash it off your hands.

This is a fun little hands-on experiment that demonstrates why hand washing is so important.

Soaps are meant to break surface tension of water so that it can clean an object. This is an experiment that anyone can do, so let's get started.

### What you need:

- Plate
- Water
- Dish Soap
- Pepper

### Part 1:

1. Fill a plate with water.
2. Sprinkle pepper on the water.
3. Put a finger in the water now.

What happened to the pepper after step 3?

A: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 2: (the cool part)

4. Get the soap.
5. Put a tiny amount of soap on the tip of your finger.
6. Put your soapy finger in the water.

What happened to the pepper after step 6?

A: \_\_\_\_\_

### Why do you think this happens?

The soap breaks the surface tension of the water and the dirt is being repelled by the soap. This is exactly how germs are repelled by soap. The soap breaks the fat layer around the virus, exposing and killing the virus.

Show this amazing demonstration to your family so you become the expert in handwashing!

Have fun with this little experiment!

Seeing is Believing



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## Welcoming the New Arrival in the Age of Social Distancing.

Susan Almquist RN, MS, NCSN



You've brought your new baby home into a very close (literally) family, due to the COVID-19 epidemic. This will undoubtedly present some challenges as well as some benefits. On the bright side, if most or all of the family is working/studying at home, the whole family will be able to watch and delight in the changes and gains a new baby makes every day. On the other hand, new parents often struggle with the isolation that the intensive care of a newborn requires.

**What to do.** As long as the town allows it, make the effort to bundle up the baby, warm and safe and get out and walk.

**There are Mom's groups** that are now virtual but still a great source of support, information and fun.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ArlingtonParents/> .

**Try baby yoga** <https://www.tranquillittleone.com/>, maybe the whole family could give it a try. And consider going online to the library for online story time, since everything is virtual you can go to any library for resources.

### Just a few Story Time links:

<https://www.robbinslibrary.org/event/live-virtual-storytimes/2020-04-03/>

<https://www.caryllibrary.org/caryhome-kids>

<https://www.northboroughlibrary.org/childrenhome.asp>

**Remember**, if you are down or overwhelmed, that the CDC says that 1 out of 9 new mothers experience postpartum depression. A call to your doctor can bring you real help <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/depression/index.htm#how>.

**And don't forget the Dad's.** Studies show, 1 in 10 fathers suffer too with the same symptoms as Moms as well as others specific to men. If you are concerned, consider a call to your health care provider. **They can help.**

<https://www.myamericannurse.com/paternal-postpartum-depression/>

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## Processing Grief with Mindfulness

By Michele O'Toole, MEd, BSN, RN

We all have the potential to experience an array of emotions on any given day and some days are cloudier than others. During these days of physical distancing, grief is an emotion that we may experience. Grief may include feelings of; sadness, distress, heartbreak, angst, pain, agony, torment, affliction, suffering, mourning, despair or regret. Often associated with death of a loved one, it can also be associated with other types of loss. The unusual circumstance of life during a pandemic can evoke feelings of grief. We each have different life experiences and are unique in the way we respond to life events. Maybe we feel distressed or frustrated about not being able to participate in a favorite sport, perform in a play, take a dance class, hang out with friends or visit grandparents? Feelings of grief may arise because of financial stress or uncertainty about becoming sick. Practicing to be still and sit quietly with feelings can teach us a lot about ourselves and may offer us a way to feel less overwhelmed by our experience.

Take a moment now and make yourself comfortable, preferably in an upright position legs crossed. Draw your chin in slightly and feel the length of the spine extending from the tailbone to the top of the head. Imagine the torso is strong like the trunk of an oak tree but supple like bamboo. Take a deep breath filling your lungs completely. Hold your breath for several counts until you feel the need to exhale. Exhale a long and slow breath. Pause on the exhale for a few counts until you feel that you need to inhale. Imagine your nose is a straw and you slowly drink in the experience and breath. Continue to inhale and exhale with this breath awareness, as if were a fascinating experiment. As you breathe in and out you may feel that your body and mind begin to settle down, like sand in water. Sometimes, thoughts may come into your mind and pull at your attention. If you find yourself following your thoughts, without getting frustrated, simply notice what you are doing and bring your attention back to your breath. As in training a puppy, be patient and kind but consistent with yourself.

When practicing mindfulness, we are not ruminating in the past or projecting into the future. We create the space inside for emotions to arise and exist without judgment. This is an important step in the grieving process. When we allow space for our emotions to arise, we may discover that the emotions don't have as strong of a hold on us as they once did. By creating this healing space, we give ourselves a chance to process what we feel. We may get through a difficult emotion such as grief, by breathing gently, softening around it and sitting with it. Sitting quietly with whatever our emotional experience is in the moment, we develop the capacity to open our heart to difficult emotions. We simply are experiencing the moment in a compassionate way. There are multiple stages of grief to pass through, and in no particular order. Take your time in passing through these stages. Mindfulness practice is not an easy task but I have found that it can bring joy even in the midst of grieving.

### Three Recommended Books:

**When Things Fall Apart:** Heart Advice for Difficult Times by Pema Chodron

**The Fall of Freddie the Leaf:** A Story of Life for All Ages by Leo Buscaglia, Ph.D.

**Coming to our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness:** by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D

**Mindfulness in Plain English:** by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana



**Michele O'Toole, MEd, BSN, RN** has been a registered nurse for twenty-three years. While in nursing school at Seattle University she worked at a facility caring for AIDS patients. After graduation she was employed as a pediatrics nurse and perinatal nurse before becoming a school nurse eight years ago. Michele began to practice yoga in 1988 when she was a college exchange student in Paris. In 2000 she traveled to Mysore, India to study Ashtanga Yoga for three months. Her interest in meditation inspired her to visit Lhasa, Tibet during the same trip. While working as a nurse in a Chicago hospital she had two children of her own and taught yoga classes on the side. In 2005 she was certified as a Forrest Yoga Instructor. After moving to Massachusetts thirteen years ago she taught at Emerson Hospital Wellness Center in Concord, and Union Yoga in Andover while continuing to practice as a nurse. She has a particular interest in Jon Kabat-Zinn's MBSR-Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and enjoys bringing elements of mindfulness practice into the school nursing office.

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## Arlington EATS During COVID-19

By Andy Winther R. N., B.S.N



### What is Arlington EATS?

It's a program that provides food to residents in need. Arlington EATS' **MISSION** is to engage the community in eliminating food

insecurity and hunger in Arlington. Arlington Eats provide bagged groceries and school lunches to the people in need. Arlington is very fortunate to have Arlington EATS in our town as a resource; especially during this difficult time.

### How do I qualify to receive food from Arlington EATS?

Call Arlington Food Hotline at (781) 316-3400 or go to <https://www.arlingtoneats.org/services/get-food/>

- Please leave a message with your name, address, phone number, family size and you will receive a call back as soon as possible. Any Arlington resident who is struggling to pay for food may call to set up a home delivery.
- Deliveries will include canned and shelf stable food, dairy products, fresh produce and may include prepared meals.
- Please call back when you need another delivery. Households may request a delivery once/week.

### Where does the food come from?

The food comes from Greater Boston Food Bank and collected by Food Link.



### How many bags of food does Arlington EATS provide to Arlington residents?

Right now about 500 bags are being made per week, and the numbers are increasing each week, and are expected to increase.

### What has changed since COVID-19?

To comply with social distancing food can no longer be picked up at the Arlington EATS Market. Food is being delivered to people's homes by the Medical Reserve Corps of Massachusetts.



### Who does all the work?

Arlington EATS relies heavily on volunteers. With the increasing demand, additional shifts have been added. Arlington EATS is still looking for volunteers to help pack bags, unload the delivery truck and re-stock shelves. Even Arlington School Nurses volunteer to help serve Arlington residents and kids (see photo).



### Want to volunteer or learn more?

If you are interested in volunteering and are between 19-59 please sign up at <https://arlington.volunteergopher.com/VMS/register/edit>

To read more about Arlington EATS, go to <https://www.arlingtoneats.org/>

### Thank you

We want to thank everyone from Arlington EATS, Arlington Food Services, and all the volunteers.

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## Meet the Nurse

Susan Almquist RN, MS, NCSN



**Susan:** Welcome back to Meet the Nurse. Today let's get to know **Bracket nurse Diane Vergnani.**

Diane, you must know the Arlington School system as well as any of the nurses. Tell us about various roles you have played with Arlington schools over the years.

**Diane:** Yes, Susan, I have been part of the Arlington Public School System for

many years as both a parent and a nurse. I have lived and worked through many changes. I have worked in all the schools in some capacity. The Ottoson Middle School was my first permanent position. I transitioned to the Brackett Elementary School in 2003. It was a difficult transition from the middle schooler to the elementary aged students at first. I remember when one of the first times a kindergarten student came into my office and I asked them their name. They told me their first name and I said what's your last name? They stared at me blankly. I explained, your other name, your second name, and the stare continued. I thought, oh no! I am in trouble! I have adapted, and I love this age as well. My first kindergarten class are seniors in college now, my middle schoolers are in their 30's and some are Arlington Police and Firefighters! I get great satisfaction seeing these former students grow up and become productive adults.

**Susan:** From all those experiences, what do you think marks the biggest changes and most interesting developments?

**Diane:** The Town of Arlington has changed dramatically since I have lived and worked here. Many young families have moved into the Town. They bring with them parents interested in supporting their schools. They are active in PTO organizations, fundraisers, and enrichment activities. The student enrollment has exploded and stressed the school systems' buildings and staff. The Town has responded with renovations and new construction. I am excited for Arlington's future and the New High School that is on its way.

**Susan:** Diane, I know that you and your family have gone through a big change in the last year. Tell us about your grand twins and how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your relationship with them.

**Diane:** My grandkids are still very young and their worlds revolve around their parents and life at home. They've noticed that their Mom and Dad are constantly around and that they are being asked to wash their hands a lot more often! More recently, they have asked questions about why they can't visit their favorite places, see their friends at preschool, and why people are wearing masks. They cannot grasp the concept of a pandemic, but generally understand that all of these changes are in an effort for them and others not to get sick. I think that it is much harder for older kiddos. Routines have changed so much. Holidays and birthday parties are being celebrated differently. I have seen families adapt to this quite well. Drive-by birthday parties, sidewalk chalk messages left for friends, FaceTime Easter egg hunts, and many Zoom family gatherings. I am impressed at the ingenuity of our families and the use of technology. This pandemic is hard for everyone in different ways!

**Susan:** For fun, tell us something about yourself that will surprise us:

**Diane:** Well, I bet you never knew that I have an interest in ballroom dancing! Maybe you will see me waltzing through the health office someday!

**Susan:** Thanks Diane and thanks for the great suggestions listed below springing from your love of dancing.

### Did you know that music and dancing are great ways to relieve stress and get exercise?

Try singing along to some of your favorite songs. Learn some dance moves from some youtube videos.

#### Five potential health benefits of music

- Dancing can help you keep fit.
- Singing alone and in groups could make you happier.
- Singing can boost your immune system.
- Singing might help you stop snoring.
- Playing an instrument keeps your brain in shape.

#### Five potential health benefits of music - BBC Bitesize

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### Slam Dunk High School Quarantine Activity Worth Watching



#### The Last Dance

Airs Sundays, April 19 -  
May 17, 2020 at 9:00  
p.m. on ESPN2 (TV14-L)

This 10 episode  
documentary series  
highlights the true story

of how the Chicago Bulls won 6 NBA titles in 8 years under the leadership of Michael Jordan.



### Ticks in your backyard: those tiny ugly poisonous monsters.

Hopefully you are able to get outside and enjoy the spring in some of Arlington's green spaces. If you go for a walk in the woods or any grassy areas, we need to watch out for ticks for both ourselves and for our 4 legged friends. This is the time of year that ticks are coming out big time!

#### So what can I do to prevent ticks from getting on me?

- Wear light-colored clothing
- Tuck your pant legs into your socks
- Avoid tick-infested areas like tall grass areas, woody areas, bushes
- Check yourself and your pets after going for a walk, and carefully remove the ticks.
- Use tick repellants spray on you and your dog, store bought or homemade
- Walk in the center of trails

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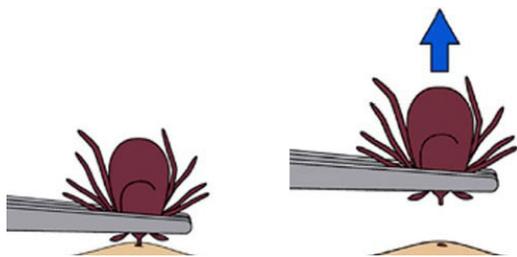
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### What do I do if I find a tick on me or my dog?

If you do find a tick, you have to remove the tick, the sooner you remove a tick the better. A tick has to be attached for 36 hours before disease can be transmitted to you or your dog. If it's under your skin, get help to remove it as it may need a few tries to get it all.

### How do I remove a tick?

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.



2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.

3. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

4. Never crush a tick with your fingers. Dispose of a live tick by putting it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet.

[https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing\\_a\\_tick.html](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html)

### What should I do next?

After you remove the tick, watch out for any of these symptoms for 30 days. If you find that you have any of these symptoms call your health care provider.

- Rash • Fever • Fatigue • Headache
- Muscle pain • Joint swelling and pain

### Are there any natural tick preventatives?

Ticks do not like the smell of lemon, orange, cinnamon, lavender, peppermint, rose geranium, cedar, citronella and eucalyptus. You can make your own repellent if you have any of the above ingredients or you can buy already mixed formulas.

**Watch out for ticks, but still go outside and have fun in Arlington.**

## New Faces on an Old Tradition



As Easter and Passover approached, those of us who celebrate these holidays knew this year would be different. Physical distancing and stay at home guidelines made worship services and large gatherings impossible. It would be a subdued season with many traditions being

put on hold. One local family figured out how to keep an old tradition alive in these trying times.

Pisanki are beautifully decorated eggs. The art of Pisanki in Poland and several countries in Eastern Europe is a tradition passed down from generation to generation. Yvonne Klosinski of Arlington was taught the craft by her mother. She remembers many seasons of Pisanki--making them and giving them away. The yolks are removed so after they are dyed and painted, the eggs can be collected and displayed. Yvonne says, "Pisanki are often done with candle wax and color dye or colored eggs which are scraped to reveal the lighter shade of the eggshell in intricate designs."

Modern adaptations appear over time with the use of new materials and techniques. The variety and designs are unlimited. This year, Yvonne and her daughters, Emily and Amanda, designed and painted Pisanki that are unique and will forever symbolize Easter 2020.

