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## Avoiding the Flu

Flu season is worse than usual this year, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that this year's flu epidemic is showing elevated activity.

Even if you got the flu shot this year, you might still be susceptible to getting sick. Each season, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the flu viruses that researchers determine are most likely to circulate that year. This is why the flu vaccine is more effective some years than others. This year, the flu vaccine may not protect well against the more severe influenza A (H3N2) virus that is circulating. However, the CDC still recommends the flu vaccine as it should offer at least partial protection.

According to the CDC, the flu commonly spreads through droplets made when people cough, sneeze and talk, as well as when

people touch something with the flu virus on it and then touch their mouths, noses or eyes.

Children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with disabilities and other health conditions are at increased risk of getting the flu. Whether or not you have been vaccinated, you can still take measures to protect yourself and others from the flu.

- When possible, avoid close contact with sick individuals.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. If you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Don't touch your mouth, nose or eyes.
- Disinfect potentially contaminated surfaces, especially in shared areas such as the office kitchen.

In addition to keeping yourself healthy, you can help protect others from getting sick from your germs.

- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Stay home for at least a day after your fever is gone, with the exception of getting medical care.

If you do get sick, aside from keeping your germs to yourself, here are a few suggestions for getting better as quickly as possible:

- Rest as much as possible.
- Drink plenty of water, broth and other clear fluids.
- Relieve symptoms by gargling with salt water, putting a humidifier in the room and covering yourself with a warm blanket.
- Talk to your doctor about a prescription antiviral medication to help with the flu.

When reading a lengthy document, print it out to help reduce eyestrain from reading on a screen.

## Take Care of Your Eyes

February is Low Vision Awareness Month, highlighting the importance of taking care of your eyes and catching problems before you lose vision. Aside from annual eye exams, you can protect your eyes on a daily basis with a few healthy choices.

**Eat right.** Eating a healthy diet is as important for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. A few foods that are especially good for eye health include vegetables such as spinach, kale and collard greens, and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and tuna.

**Put on protective eyewear.** Protect your eyes from the glare of the sun with sunglasses that block at least 99 percent of UVA and UVB radiation, and wear protective eyewear with polycarbonate lenses when engaging in activities that could harm your eyes, such as when using power tools or chemicals or when playing certain sports.

**Rest your eyes.** Reading, looking at an electronic screen or focusing at a short distance for an extended period can cause eyestrain. Avoid eye fatigue by glancing away from your work at least every 20 minutes.

Provided by:

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# 10-minute Workouts

If you lack motivation for a 5-mile run or an hour workout session in the gym, new research reveals good news for you. Recent studies show that short but intense bouts of exercise can deliver fitness benefits. What does this mean for you and your fading New Year's resolution to get into better shape?

If you don't have the time for lengthy workouts, you can reap benefits from short spurts of exercise—the catch is that that short amount of time is high intensity. If you're looking for how to get started, you can try replicating the workout used in an exercise study conducted at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada:

- Warm up on a stationary bicycle for two minutes.
- Pedal “all-out” for 20 seconds, followed by two minutes of easy pedaling.
- Repeat the 20-second intensity and two-minute recovery periods twice more, for a total of 60 seconds of intense pedaling.
- Finish your 10-minute workout with a three-minute cool-down phase.

Workout volunteers in the study participated in three sessions per week for six weeks. At the end of that time, they showed improved endurance capacity, healthier blood pressure and other benefits.

With only a couple minutes of intense exercise needed a week, you don't have an excuse to not work out. Find an activity you enjoy, and commit to just a few minutes a week for better health.

# Going Gluten-free



Gluten is a protein found in grains, including wheat, barley and rye. Individuals may choose a gluten-free diet for several reasons. Whether you have celiac disease, gluten intolerance or are simply looking for a diet change, here are a few tips for transitioning to a gluten-free diet:

- Stock up on foods that are naturally gluten-free, including beans, eggs, meats and fish, fruits, vegetables and most dairy items.
- Find alternatives for gluten-laden staples. As gluten-free diets become more common for health and popularity reasons, many food manufacturers are now producing gluten-free breads, cereals and desserts.
- If you have celiac disease, be extremely careful of cross-contamination. For example, don't share a jar of peanut butter with someone who spreads it on wheat bread. Simply dipping a knife back into the jar can cause contamination. Some individuals may experience a reaction to even a tiny amount of gluten, so be cautious with shared food and kitchens.



## Apple and Celery Salad

Brighten up your winter dinner table with this crunchy salad served as a side dish or appetizer.

- 1 Tbsp. orange juice
- 2 Tbsp. light mayonnaise
- 2 cups apples, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup peanuts, chopped

In a large bowl, mix orange juice with mayonnaise. Add apples, celery, raisins and peanuts to the dressing mixture and stir well. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Yield: 6 servings. Each serving provides 150 calories, 8 g of fat, 40 mg of sodium, 1 g of protein and 2 g of fiber.

Source: USDA