



FLU SEASON IS COMING

WHAT'S INSIDE

Lunchbox
Makeovers

2

When Should I
Get My Flu Shot?

3

Irritable Bowel Syndrome:
It Affects Women Differently

4

Here's How to Stay Healthy

The best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is for those over 6 months of age to be vaccinated. (There are some exceptions, and your doctor can discuss those with you.) For information on this year's flu vaccine, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.

In addition, there are simple precautions you can take to help avoid the spread of germs during flu season:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Practice good health habits. Get plenty of sleep and exercise, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat healthy food.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

— Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Caring for you and about you



Senior Health Update

Exercising with Arthritis

Exercise is important for people with arthritis. It increases strength and flexibility, reduces joint pain, and helps fight fatigue. Your doctor or physical therapist can recommend exercises that are best for you, which might include range-of-motion, strengthening and aerobic exercises.

- **Range-of-motion exercises.** These relieve stiffness and increase your ability to move your joints for everyday tasks.
- **Strengthening exercises.** These help you build strong muscles that help support and protect your joints.
- **Aerobic exercise.** These help with overall fitness. They can improve your cardiovascular health, help you control your weight and increase stamina.
- **Other activities.** Any movement, no matter how small, can help. If a particular workout or activity appeals to you, ask your doctor whether it's right for you.

— Source: Mayo Clinic

E-Cigarettes

Get the Facts

Electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, are nicotine-delivery devices. They are battery operated, but are designed to look and feel like a cigarette. The nicotine in them is derived from tobacco plants. The potential user is led to believe that e-cigarettes are a healthier alternative to smoking cigarettes and can be used to help stop smoking.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not approved the e-cigarette as a smoking-cessation aid and says it has not been shown to be safe. Preliminary FDA tests of e-cigarettes indicate they contain carcinogens and toxic chemicals.

In addition, e-cigarettes model smoking behavior to youth. Many of the nicotine solutions come in fruit and candy flavors. This increases the appeal of e-cigarettes to young people, paving the way for the product to become a "gateway" to tobacco use.

The best advice for the health of tobacco users is to quit using tobacco products of any kind. For help with quitting, visit <http://smokefree.gov>.

— Sources: National Institutes of Health; North Dakota Department of Health; U.S. Food and Drug Administration



Lunchbox Makeovers

Try These Easy Swaps for Better Nutrition

Many lunchboxes are overloaded with fat, sugar and salt and are missing fruit, vegetables and whole grains. The good news? There are simple, easy ways to improve your kids' nutrition by making some simple lunchbox swaps.

- If your child brings a packed lunch from home and buys milk at school, encourage her to choose 1% or skim milk instead of whole milk. Or buy skim or 1% milk at the grocery store and pack it.
- Use whole-grain bread instead of white bread for sandwiches. Choose breads that list "whole wheat" as the first ingredient. If

the main flour listed on the label is "wheat" or "unbleached wheat flour," the product is not whole grain.

- Include at least one serving of fruit in every lunch. Try buying a new type of fruit each week to let your child discover new favorites. Try pears, sliced melon, cups of applesauce, grapes or pineapple (fresh or canned in its own juice). Try serving fruit cut into slices, cubed or with a yogurt dipping sauce.

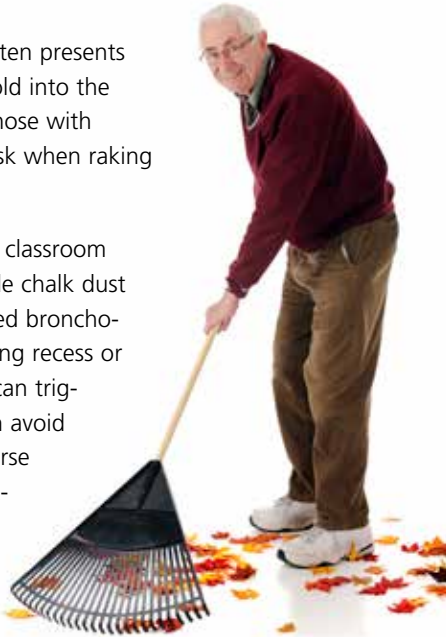
— Source: Center for Science in the Public Interest

Fall Allergies — *The Season Brings Its Own Challenges to Allergy Sufferers*

Fall can be especially difficult for people with allergies, especially if they are sensitive to mold and ragweed pollen. Here are three things that can contribute to fall allergies:

- **Lingering warm weather.** While most people enjoy Indian summer, unseasonably warm temperatures can make rhinitis symptoms last longer. Mold spores can be released and dispersed during dry, windy weather. Be sure to begin taking medications before your symptoms start.
- **Pesky leaves.** For allergy sufferers, raking often presents a problem. It can stir agitating pollen and mold into the air, causing allergy and asthma symptoms. Those with allergies should wear a NIOSH-rated N95 mask when raking leaves, mowing the lawn and gardening.
- **School allergens.** Kids are often exposed to classroom irritants and allergy triggers. These can include chalk dust and classroom pets. Kids with exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) may experience attacks during recess or gym class. Help your child understand what can trigger his allergies and asthma, and how he can avoid symptoms. Notify teachers and the school nurse of any emergency medications, such as quick-relief inhalers and epinephrine.

— Source: *American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*



Ask the Experts “Does My Child Need Additional Hearing Tests?”

Q: My child failed a hearing screening at school. What does that mean?

A: School-based hearing screening provides pass/fail information on your child’s ability to hear. If your child fails a screening, this means that further, more complete testing is needed. See an audiologist certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) for a comprehensive evaluation of your child’s hearing and middle-ear function. An audiologist will use certain procedures to determine if your child has a hearing loss and, if so, the type and degree of the loss. These procedures may include a pure-tone hearing test, speech audiometry and tests of middle-ear function. Depending on the child’s age and/or ability to reliably respond to these tests, hearing sensitivity may be determined using tests that do not require the active participation of your child. Based on the results, the audiologist will provide you with information regarding the impact that your child’s type and degree of hearing loss may have on his or her communication, learning and social skills. The audiologist will provide you with recommendations for intervention and appropriate referrals.

— Source: *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*

DID YOU KNOW?

When Should I Get My Flu Shot?

Flu vaccination should begin soon after the vaccine becomes available, ideally by October. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue to be offered throughout the flu season, even in January or later. While seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, during most seasons influenza activity peaks in January or later. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, it is best that people get vaccinated early so they are protected before influenza begins spreading in their community.

— Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Protection*





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**Diet and Prostate Cancer
 Is There a Connection?**

The exact role of diet in prostate cancer is not clear, but several factors have been studied. Men who eat a lot of red meat or high-fat dairy products appear to have a slightly higher chance of getting prostate cancer. These men also tend to eat fewer fruits and vegetables. Doctors aren't sure which of these factors is responsible for raising the risk.

Some studies have suggested that men who consume a lot of calcium (through food or supplements) may have a higher risk of developing prostate cancer. Dairy foods (which are often high in calcium) might also increase risk. But most studies have not found such a link with the levels of calcium found in the average diet, and it's important to note that calcium is known to have other important health benefits.

— Source: American Cancer Society

**Irritable Bowel Syndrome
 It Affects Women Differently**

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is not a disease but a syndrome, meaning a group of symptoms. People with IBS most often have abdominal pain, bloating and discomfort. Some people have constipation. Other people with IBS have diarrhea. Still others go back and forth between the two. Symptoms may go away for a few months, then return. Or symptoms may be constant and get worse over time.

IBS does not damage the intestines. Instead, it affects the way the digestive tract functions, and so is called a "functional disorder." The exact cause is unknown, but in people with IBS, the colon seems to be extra sensitive to certain foods and stress. Normally, women are more sensitive to

irritants in the digestive tract than men. This may help explain why IBS is more common in women. Hormones may play a role as well. Symptoms often become worse just before or at the start of a woman's period.

You can often control mild symptoms by making changes to your diet and lifestyle. Fiber supplements or over-the-counter medicines to control diarrhea may help. Prescription drugs are sometimes used to treat women with severe IBS, but some may have serious side effects. Researchers are studying new drugs and other approaches to relieve symptoms of IBS.

— Sources: Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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