

4TH QUARTER | 2023

Live Well, Work Well

A smiling man with curly hair and a bandage on his arm, with a blurred background of a healthcare setting. The man is wearing a white t-shirt and a light green jacket. The background shows a blurred figure of a person in a green shirt and a stethoscope, suggesting a medical or healthcare environment.

What You Need to Know About Vaccines for Fall 2023

Presented by
Liberty ISD

In the News



Catch up on the latest developments of the most significant wellness-related news from the past three months.



What You Need to Know About Vaccines for Fall 2023

Health experts anticipate another wave of respiratory viral infections this fall, namely due to the flu, the virus that causes COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Fortunately, vaccines for all three viruses will be available for the first time in the fall.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone eligible should at least receive the flu and COVID-19 shots. Individuals aged 65 and older are encouraged to talk with their doctors about potentially receiving the RSV vaccine, which is new. Some other RSV-preventive products, but not a vaccine, are available for babies and young children.

Experts note that getting the vaccines at the end of summer could help ward off respiratory illness when risks heighten in the fall. Vaccinations have been shown to reduce hospitalizations and death and may be particularly beneficial for those with compromised health.

Do I Need Another COVID-19 Shot?

The CDC recommends that [all eligible individuals receive a COVID-19 shot this fall](#), even if they got the original vaccination in the past. However, the CDC has yet to release full vaccination guidance since the latest

manufactured versions of the COVID-19 vaccine are still awaiting federal authorization.

Can I Get All the Vaccines at Once?

Last year, many individuals received a COVID-19 and flu shot simultaneously to seemingly good effect; however, health experts will continue reviewing cases and compiling data to illuminate any potential safety concerns.

The CDC says [it's OK to get the RSV vaccination at the same time as the other two](#), but there is still little data regarding its safety and efficacy. Eligible individuals should discuss any vaccination regimen with their doctor before getting the shots.

Want to Learn More?

The CDC reaffirms that getting vaccinated is one of the safest ways to protect your health. The agency is expected to release additional vaccine guidance after the latest COVID-19 shots gain federal authorization. In the meantime, individuals should direct any vaccination questions or concerns to their primary care physicians.



Anxiety Screenings Recommended for Most Americans

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) now recommends that adults under the age of 65 get regularly screened for anxiety. For the first time, the Task Force recommends screening all adults under 65 who don't have a diagnosed mental health disorder or related symptoms. This is meant to help primary care clinicians identify early signs of anxiety, which can go undetected for years.

The latest recommendation also focuses on screening for specific groups of people, especially those who are pregnant and have given birth within the past year. Last year, the Task Force recommended screening children ages 8 to 17 for anxiety. This now means all Americans ages 8 to 64 should be screened for anxiety.

Anxiety disorders typically begin in childhood and early adulthood, and symptoms appear to decline with age. Anxiety looks and feels different for everyone, so it's important to understand how anxiety can present itself. Here are common symptoms of anxiety:

- Anxious thoughts that are difficult to control
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Trouble concentrating

Contact a doctor if you have concerns about anxiety.



How Often Do You Need to Exercise for Optimal Heart Health?

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week but doesn't specify an optimal pattern. [Research](#) recently published in The Journal of the American Medical Association suggests that “weekend warriors” may realize the same cardiovascular health benefits as those who work out multiple times a week. A weekend warrior fits a week's worth of exercise into a couple of days.

Here are the key findings about cardiovascular outcomes:

- The risk of heart attack was 27% lower for weekend warriors and 35% lower for those who spread their exercise out over several days.
- The risk of heart failure was 38% lower and 36% lower, respectively.
- The risk of arterial fibrillation (AFib) was 22% and 19% lower, respectively.
- The risk for stroke was 21% and 17% lower, respectively.

The study found that working out at least 150 minutes each week can help reduce one's risk of stroke, heart attack and AFib—and those minutes can be split equally across the week or concentrated into the weekend. As long as you're hitting 150 minutes, you can reap cardiovascular benefits. The weekend warrior schedule could be an option if you're short on time during the week.

Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise regimen.

NHO



Learn more about the three upcoming national health observances (NHOs) in this section.



October: Health Literacy Month

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate decisions. Your health care provider may provide medical language you're unfamiliar with or don't understand. This is why it's essential to know how health-literate you are.

October is Health Literacy Month, as health literacy can help people obtain appropriate medical and behavioral health care. Those with low health literacy may not receive equal care because they do not have the same level of understanding as their provider. Ways to improve health literacy include asking questions, researching your medical conditions and having further conversations with your provider.

Understanding your health is more important now than ever, so work on ways to build your health literacy and become a better patient and health advocate for yourself.

November: American Diabetes Month

Over 34 million U.S. adults are impacted by some form of diabetes, according to the CDC. Diabetes comes in two forms: Type 1 and Type 2. While Type 2 diabetes is more common, both can be deadly because they affect the body's insulin production.

November is National Diabetes Month. With 1 in 5 adults not knowing that they are impacted directly by diabetes, it's essential to understand the risk factors and symptoms. Family and age most significantly impact Type 1 diabetes, while Type 2 diabetes is most directly impacted by being overweight, not exercising and having a family history of diabetes.

Visit diabetes.org to learn more, or talk to your doctor about any concerns about diabetes.



December: National Safe Toys and Gifts Month

As the holidays approach, it's time to gather with loved ones to share food and gifts. Sometimes, well-intentioned gifts can come with unforeseeable risks. It's important to be aware of toys that may harm those you give them to.

December is National Safe Toys and Gifts Month. With the holidays right around the corner, now is the time to think about a gift before you give it. Tips for selecting appropriate toys include checking labels for age ranges; avoiding toys with small parts that can injure, be swallowed or cause blindness; and ensuring toys are labeled as nontoxic.

If you're gifting sporting equipment or similar gear, providing protective gear (e.g., helmets and knee pads) is important. It's also important to periodically check for safety recalls and warnings at recalls.gov.

Looking Ahead...

January

Thyroid Awareness
Month

February

American
Heart Month

March

National Nutrition
Month

Health and Wellness



Remain on top of the latest trends in health and wellness with the three articles in this section.

What's the Gut-brain Connection?

Scientific research indicates that gut health may play a bigger role in overall well-being than many people realize. In fact, research published in the National Library of Medicine (NLM) shows that a nervous system in the gut produces approximately 95% of the body's serotonin, which regulates mood, sleep, digestion and other critical functions. Commonly referred to as a "second brain," the gut's nervous system contains over 100 million nerve cells that line the gastrointestinal tract from the esophagus to the rectum, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine. This nervous system is likely the reason for feelings like "butterflies" in your stomach and explains why people sometimes feel nauseous when anxious or excited.

Crucially, the relationship between your mind and gut also impacts your mental and physical health. An unhealthy gut can contribute to mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression, and vice versa. It can also contribute to the development of certain diseases.

Understanding the Gut-brain Connection

Both the brain and the gut have neurons that tell the body how to behave. They also have neurotransmitters, which control feelings and emotions. Communication occurs through the vagus nerve, which connects the gut and the brain through the gut-brain axis. Scientists don't believe that the "second brain" in your gut is capable of thought; however, they've shown that it can communicate with your brain, producing significant results. For example, people with irritable bowel syndrome often experience big emotional shifts, such as mood changes, depression and anxiety.

Signs of an Unhealthy Gut

The NLM reported that gut health is linked to the following conditions:

- Mental health issues
- A weak immune system

- Autoimmune diseases
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Endocrine diseases
- Gastrointestinal diseases
- Cancer

An unhealthy gut can impact your immune system, weight and hormones. It may also make you more susceptible to disease. Stress, lack of sleep, antibiotics and diet can negatively impact gut health.

Improving Your Gut Health

A healthy gut may be associated with improved mental and physical health. Promote gut health with the following practices:

- **Manage your stress.** Chronic stress is hard on your gut. Reduce stress by meditating, spending time with family and friends, limiting alcohol consumption and getting counseling.
- **Get enough sleep.** Insufficient sleep can negatively impact your gut, which can cause more sleep issues. Prioritize getting seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep every night.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Hydration can increase the diversity of healthy bacteria in your gut and reduce the type of gut bacteria that cause gastrointestinal infections.

The connection between your gut and your brain significantly impacts your overall health. With certain lifestyle changes, such as a healthy diet and adequate stress management, you can reap the benefits of a healthy gut. Speak to your health care provider for more information on gut-healthy foods.



Elevating Your Psychological Resiliency

Psychological resilience refers to the ability to mentally withstand or adapt to uncertainty and adversity. Building resilience to life's inevitable changes and challenges can help you cope with and manage stressors. Resilience can also help protect you from various mental health symptoms.

Resilience isn't developed overnight; it's built over time and shaped by personal experiences. Just like building muscle, elevating your psychological resilience requires time and commitment. Consider the following strategies:

- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle.** For a holistic approach to maintaining physical wellness, you should prioritize sleep, eat healthily, stay hydrated and engage in physical activity regularly.
- **Practice self-care.** Get into the habit of caring for yourself and doing activities that make you happy. With the rise in mental health issues, it's important to prioritize yourself now more than ever.
- **Maintain an optimistic outlook.** Adjusting your thought process and reframing any negative thoughts can be beneficial. Own your negative thoughts; they can lose power when you say them out loud.
- **Review your employee benefits.** Your employer may offer mental well-being support and resources, so check what's available in your health plan.

Make your psychological resilience a priority this month. A good way to start is by focusing on doing at least one thing every day for yourself that supports your overall well-being.

If you have any concerns, contact a health care professional or use the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline by calling 800-662-HELP (4357).



The Health Benefits of Cinnamon

Cinnamon, a beloved spice known for its spicy taste and warm aroma, is not just a flavorful addition to your morning latte or baked goods. It's a versatile spice associated with a powerhouse of health benefits. From its potential to regulate blood sugar to its anti-inflammatory properties, cinnamon offers a range of advantages for your well-being.

Consider the following health benefits of cinnamon:

- **Antioxidant properties**—Cinnamon is rich in antioxidants, such as polyphenols, which combat oxidative stress and free radicals in the body. This helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases and promotes overall health.
- **Anti-inflammatory effects**—Chronic inflammation is linked to various health issues, including heart disease and cancer. Cinnamon's anti-inflammatory properties can help ease swelling, potentially lowering the risk of these conditions.
- **Boosted heart health**—Cinnamon may contribute to heart health by reducing low-density lipoprotein (or LDL) cholesterol levels. Lowering "bad" cholesterol levels can decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease.

- **Weight management**—Cinnamon can stabilize blood sugar levels, reduce cravings and increase feelings of fullness, making it easier to manage food intake. It can also boost metabolism since the body uses more energy to process the spice than other foods.
- **Clear skin**—Cinnamon's antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties may help combat acne and fight skin infections. As such, topical applications of cinnamon (e.g., cinnamon-infused mask) can benefit skin health.

With its delightful flavor and remarkable health benefits, cinnamon can be a valuable addition to your wellness journey. While cinnamon offers numerous health benefits, enjoying it in moderation is essential. Health experts recommend no more than one teaspoon per day for most adults. Always consult with a health care professional before making significant changes to your diet or supplement regimen.

Recipes



Try out these two healthy recipes from the USDA's MyPlate Kitchen website.

Fall Veggie Casserole

Makes: 8 servings



Ingredients

- 1 medium eggplant
- 4 tomatoes
- 1 green pepper
- 1 onion
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese

Nutritional Information (per serving)

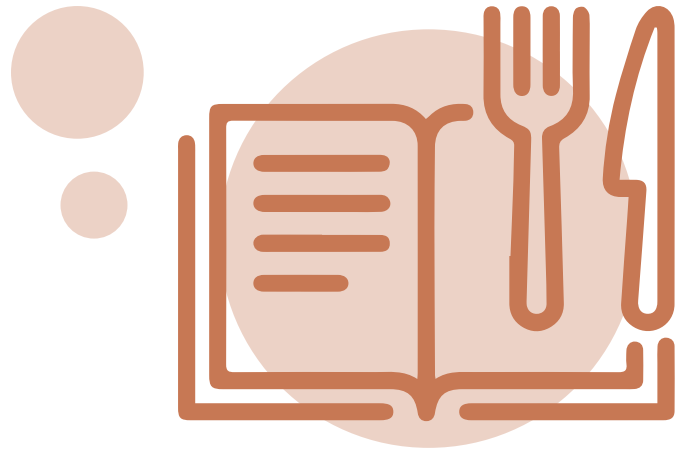
- Calories: 86
- Total fat: 6 g
- Saturated fat: 1 g
- Cholesterol: 1 mg
- Sodium: 313 mg
- Carbohydrate: 8 g
- Dietary fiber: 3 g
- Total sugars: 6 g
- Added sugars included: 0 g
- Protein: 2 g
- Vitamin D: 0 mcg
- Calcium: 32 mg
- Iron: 0 mg
- Potassium: 334 mg

Directions

- 1| Remove the skin from the eggplant. Cut the eggplant into cubes.
- 2| Chop the tomatoes into small pieces.
- 3| Cut the green pepper in half. Remove the seeds and cut them into small pieces.
- 4| Dice the onion.
- 5| Cut the garlic into tiny pieces.
- 6| Cook the first eight ingredients in a large skillet until tender.
- 7| Top with Parmesan cheese, and serve.

Winter Crisp

Makes: 6 servings



Ingredients

2 Tbsp. cinnamon
3 Tbsp. margarine
½ cup sugar
3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
1 tsp. grated lemon peel
5 cups apple (unpeeled, sliced)
1 cup fresh cranberries
⅔ cup rolled oats
⅓ cup brown sugar
¼ cup whole-wheat flour

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories: 289
Total fat: 7 g
Saturated fat: 1 g
Cholesterol: 0 mg
Sodium: 54 mg
Carbohydrate: 58 g
Dietary fiber: 6 g
Total sugars: 39 g
Added sugars included: 27 g
Protein: 3 g
Vitamin D: 0 mcg
Calcium: 50 mg
Iron: 1 mg
Potassium: 236 mg

Directions

- 1| For the filling, combine the sugar, flour and lemon peel in a medium bowl and mix well.
- 2| Stir in the apples and cranberries.
- 3| Spoon the filling into a 6-cup baking dish.
- 4| For the topping, combine the oats, brown sugar, flour and cinnamon in a small bowl.
- 5| Stir in the melted margarine.
- 6| Sprinkle the topping over the filling.
- 7| Bake at 375 F for 40 minutes or until the filling is bubbly and the top is brown.
- 8| Serve warm or at room temperature.