

1ST QUARTER | 2024

Live Well, Work Well

**Ready or Not,
It's Flu Season**

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.



Ready or Not, It's Flu Season

Flu season typically runs from October to May. However, most flu cases occur between December and February. What does that mean for you? It means that now is the time to protect yourself, your loved ones and your co-workers.

Most people wrongly assume that the flu won't affect them because they're healthy adults. The seasonal flu can make even the healthiest of people sick, and it can even result in hospitalization. That's why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) strongly recommends getting vaccinated as early as possible.

What Is the Flu Vaccine?

The flu vaccine is the most effective way to protect yourself against the flu. The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months or older get the flu vaccine. There are many flu variants, and they can change and morph as the flu season progresses. The vaccines are created each flu season to combat flu viruses that research indicates will be most common.

Nine flu vaccines are available for the 2023-24 season—eight are injected, and one is sprayed in the nose. All the vaccines are quadrivalent and guard against four virus subtypes.

Where Can You Get Vaccinated?

You can get vaccinated against the flu at your doctor's office, in a clinic or pharmacy, and sometimes, at your workplace. Some urgent care clinics or local health departments will provide flu vaccines as well. Visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to locate where you can get a flu vaccine.

During this flu season, vaccination and other preventive measures can help minimize the risk of the flu for you and those around you. Other ways to stay healthy include staying home if you are sick, washing your hands frequently and maintaining a healthy diet.



New Lung Cancer Screening Guidelines Released

Only a fraction of people at high risk for lung cancer are getting screened for the disease, even though it kills more than breast, colorectal and prostate cancers combined. Under current U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) guidelines, 14.3 million Americans are eligible for screening. The new American Cancer Society (ACS) recommendation allows an additional 5 million people to become eligible for regular scans that can detect tumors early enough to save lives.

The new guidance builds upon the Task Force's recommendation and states that even heavy smokers who quit 15 years ago or more are still at risk for lung cancer and should have yearly low-dose CT scans. For example, people in their 40s or 50s who smoked a couple of packs of cigarettes a day when they were in their young adulthood often don't think of themselves as smokers, but under these new guidelines, they should still be screened annually.

Catching lung cancer early gives you the best chance of survival, which is why screening is critical. Usually, symptoms of lung cancer don't appear until the

disease is advanced, but it's still important to recognize the symptoms. The most common symptom of lung cancer is a persistent cough that worsens over time. Other common symptoms include:

- Constant chest pain
- Blood-tinged spit
- Coughing up blood
- Shortness of breath, wheezing or hoarseness
- Repeat occurrences of infections such as pneumonia or bronchitis
- Fever for no apparent reason
- Swelling of the neck and face
- Loss of weight due to a decrease in appetite
- Fatigue

Medicare and commercial insurance companies pay for tests that the Task Force recommends. However, it may take some time for insurance to cover the additional people included in the latest ACS guidelines. Contact your doctor if you have any questions about lung cancer screening or your smoking history.

Peaches, Plums, Nectarines Recalled Due to Listeria

HMC Farms, a California produce company, recently announced a voluntary recall of its whole peaches, plums and nectarines due to listeria concerns. The CDC issued a food safety alert soon after, noting that the recalled fruit had been linked to an outbreak of listeria that had contributed to one death and 10 hospitalizations since 2018.

The Illness

Listeria is the third leading cause of death from food-borne illness. It's a bacteria that can cause severe illness, especially among older people, newborns, pregnant people and those with weak immune systems. The bacteria is invasive, meaning it can travel from the gut (after being ingested) and spread to other parts of the body.

Listeria can live in cold temperatures and spread easily to other food; freezing food will not make it safe. Therefore, it's critical to check refrigerators and freezers for the recalled fruit. If you're unsure about a piece of fruit, it's safest to throw it away. Symptoms of listeria can appear similar to those of the flu and may include fever, muscle ache, fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting.

The Recall

The recalled fruits were sold in stores nationwide in 2022 and 2023 between May and November. The products were marked "HMC Farms" or "Signature Farms" and may have been sold individually or in 2-pound bags. Listeria cases linked to the fruit have been reported in California, Colorado, Kansas, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and Florida. Most people affected were aged 65 or older. However, the CDC said there were likely more infections in more places, but it's possible to recover without medical intervention, so those cases would go unreported.

The CDC's food safety alert lists all the affected sticker numbers and other characteristics that can be used to identify the recalled fruit. The products' [recall page](#)

includes additional images. While the affected fruits are now off retail shelves, consumers may still have some stock at home—particularly in freezers. Individuals are encouraged to scrutinize their fruit for the identifying markers listed on the product recall and food safety alert pages. The recalled fruit should be disposed of, and wherever it was stored (e.g., freezer) should be thoroughly cleaned.

The government is still investigating the recall, including whether any additional fruits or products with fruit ingredients were contaminated. Individuals concerned about their health or potential listeria exposure should contact their primary care physicians. Individuals can also monitor the products' [recall page](#) for any additional information that may be released as the investigation continues.



NHO



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



January: National Birth Defects Awareness Month

About 1 out of every 33 babies in the United States is born with a birth defect. These can be minor or severe, and they can be structural (e.g., cleft lip or spina bifida) or functional and developmental (e.g., Down syndrome or cystic fibrosis).

January is National Birth Defects Awareness Month. These conditions can happen for many reasons. Although not all can be prevented, people can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant. Meeting the complex needs of a person with a congenital disorder involves the whole family and can be challenging; however, finding resources, knowing what to expect and planning for the future can help.

Visit the CDC's [website](#) for more information about birth defects.

February: American Heart Month

In the United States, one person dies every 33 seconds from cardiovascular disease, making it the leading cause of death in the country. Additionally, nearly half of Americans are at risk for heart disease, and that statistic continues to rise. Some types of heart disease include arrhythmias, heart failure, heart attacks and strokes.

February is American Heart Month, so it's important to understand that while heart disease can be deadly, it's also preventable in most people. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity and physical inactivity. As such, diet and exercise are the best ways to reduce your risk of heart complications.

Contact your doctor to learn more about heart health and early warning signs.



March: National Kidney Month

While 33% of U.S. adults are at risk for kidney disease, most don't even know it. That's because kidney disease often has no symptoms until it reaches an advanced stage. Also, there are numerous physical signs of kidney disease, but most people attribute them to other conditions. That makes testing critical. Early treatment can also slow the progression of kidney disease and prevent other problems, like a heart attack, stroke or kidney failure.

March is National Kidney Month, making it a great time to take charge of your health to lower your chances of developing kidney disease. The kidneys filter blood to remove waste and extra water to create urine. They also make vital hormones that produce red blood cells, promote bone health and regulate blood pressure. Blood and urine tests are the best way to determine how well your kidneys work if you're at risk for disease.

Talk to your doctor to discuss kidney health, risk factors and warning signs.

Looking Ahead...

April

Autism Acceptance
Month

May

Mental Health
Awareness Month

June

National
Safety Month

Health and Wellness



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

5 Ways to Start Your Year Off Right

Like many other people, you may be thinking about what you would like to accomplish in 2024 or what life changes you could make. Common New Year's resolutions include losing weight, exercising, getting organized, learning new skills and saving money.

The beginning of the year is a good time to make positive life changes and strive for an overall healthier self. Consider the following five tips to start the new year off right:

- 1| Check in on your mental health.** Mental health is just as important as physical health in building a healthy lifestyle. Practice self-care and reach out to a professional if you need help.
- 2| Be social.** Social connections can help lower anxiety and depression, regulate emotions, boost self-esteem and empathy, and improve the immune system. Social connectedness can help improve physical, mental and emotional well-being.
- 3| Get regular checkups.** It's important to stay up to date on your annual physicals, necessary health tests and other preventive care. Screenings can help identify any health issues.

4| Drink more water. According to guidelines from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, women should drink 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) and men should drink 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids each day. Consuming sugary drinks (e.g., juice or soda) can cause liver damage, premature aging and anxiety. Avoid excessive alcohol consumption as well.

5| Count nutrients, not calories. Focus on improving the overall quality of your diet and not getting hung up on calories. Achieve this by adding more fiber, protein and probiotics to your diet.

If you do just one thing in 2024, consider making time for yourself. Identify the activities that make you happy or fulfilled and prioritize them. Talk to your doctor or mental health professional for guidance and support with lifestyle changes.



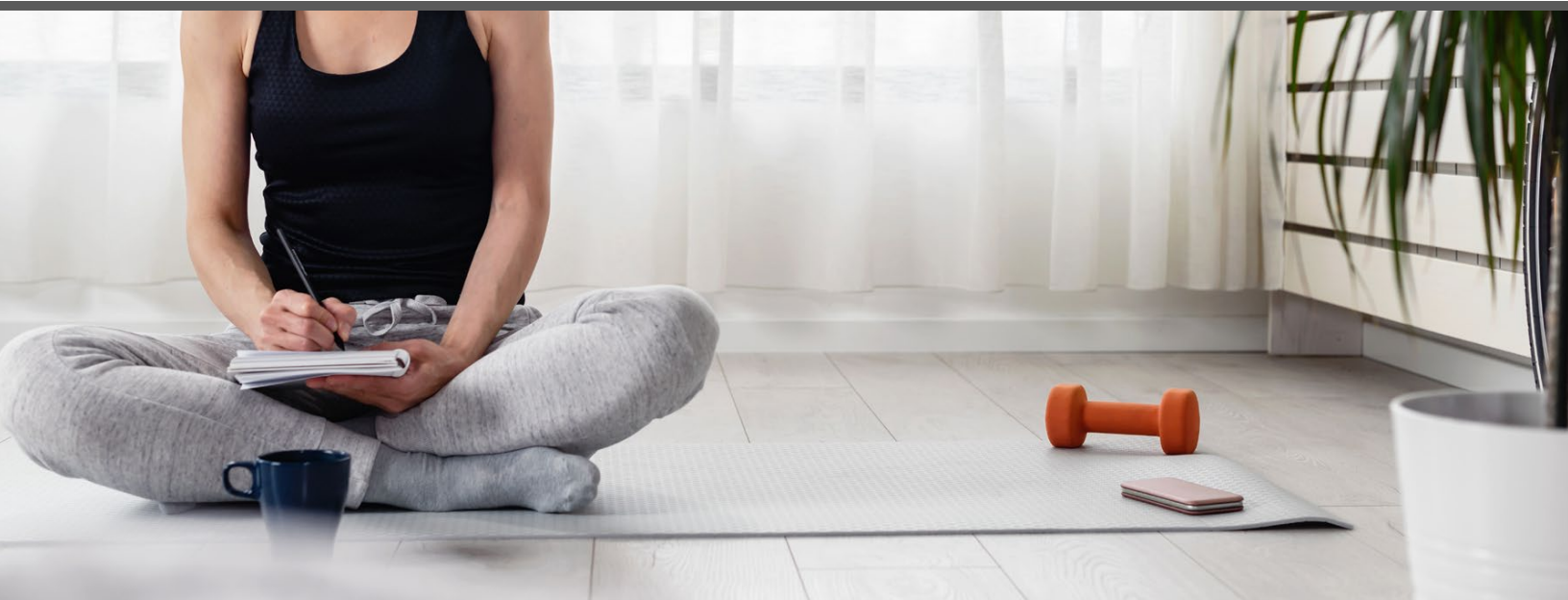
Don't Forget, It's National Blood Donor Month

Winter is one of the most difficult times of the year to collect enough blood products and donations to meet patient needs. That's why National Blood Donor Month is celebrated every January. This year, resolve to be a blood donor and consider the following health benefits of donating blood regularly:

- **Detect health problems.** Donated blood is tested, so you'll know if any irregularities were found. You're also required to undergo a quick health screening prior to giving blood.
- **Reduce heart disease risks.** Donating can help eliminate any excess buildup of iron in the blood, which can lower your risk of a heart attack.
- **Burn calories.** The blood donation process typically burns 650 calories.

Before you roll up your sleeve and commit to being a regular blood donor, check if you meet the American Red Cross' [requirements](#) to safely donate blood.





Don't Let Winter Derail Your Workout

If you find it harder to keep up with your workouts as the temperatures drop, you're not alone. Many Americans find it increasingly difficult to remain committed as the holiday blues, shorter days and less-than-ideal weather create obstacles. Whether you're a gym-goer or outdoor exerciser, there are simple ways to overcome winter obstacles and keep your fitness on track:

- **Remember to warm up.** If you're an outdoor exerciser and the weather is colder, try doing your warmup inside. Not only will you raise your internal body temperature before going outside, but you'll also increase the temperature of your muscles, which can reduce your risk for injury.
- **Prep the night before.** If you're an early morning exerciser, set out everything you need for the next day the night before. Then, all you need to do when your alarm goes off is get up, get dressed and go to the gym.
- **Have a backup plan.** Even the most dedicated exercisers can lose their motivation. That's why it's essential to have a backup workout plan that you can do at home. It doesn't have to be lengthy; doing something is better than doing nothing at all.

You could also take advantage of the winter season and try something new, like snowshoeing, ice skating or sledding, for some movement. Staying on top of your fitness during winter can be challenging, but keep pushing and think about why you work out in the first place. Focus on your reason.

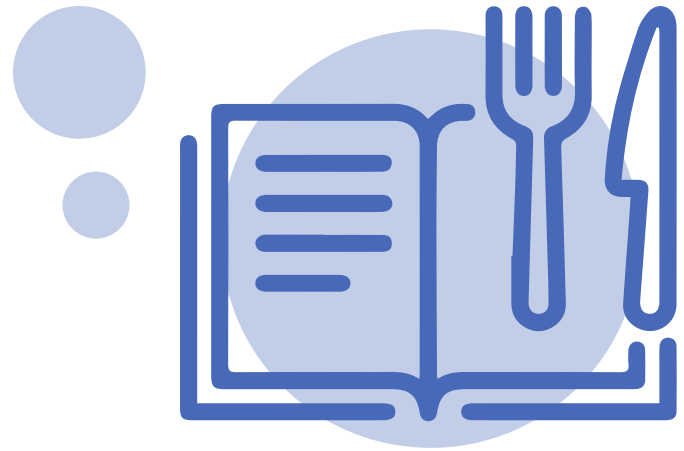
Recipes



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

Stir-fried Beef

Makes: 6 servings



Ingredients

- 1 ½ lb. sirloin steak
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- 1 garlic clove (minced)
- 1 tsp. vinegar
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 large onions (sliced)
- 1 large tomato (sliced)
- 3 cups potatoes (boiled, diced)

Nutritional Information (per serving)

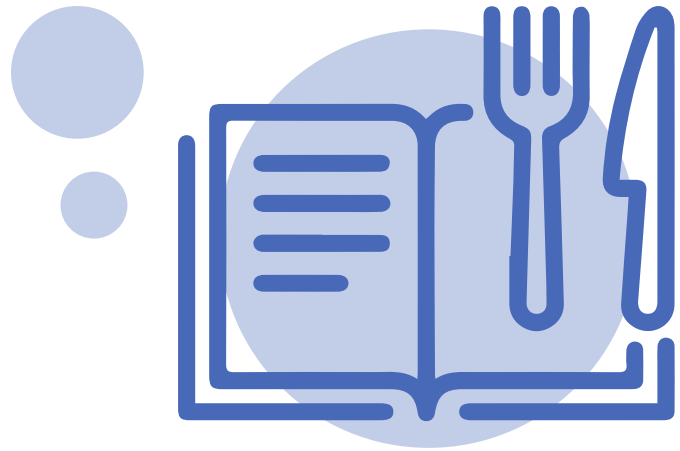
Calories	229
Total fat	6 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Cholesterol	59 mg
Sodium	104 mg
Carbohydrate	19 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Total sugars	4 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	25 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	41 mg
Iron	2 mg
Potassium	762 mg

Directions

- 1 | Trim fat from the steak and cut the steak into small, thin pieces.
- 2 | In a large skillet, heat the oil and saute the garlic until it's golden.
- 3 | Add steak, vinegar, salt and black pepper. Cook for six minutes, stirring the beef until brown.
- 4 | Add the onion and tomato, and cook until the onion is transparent. Serve with boiled potatoes.

Potato Soup

Makes: 6 servings



Ingredients

- 1 cup onion (chopped)
- 1 Tbsp. garlic (finely chopped)
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- ¼ lb. chicken (cut into bite-size pieces)
- 4 cups water
- 6 small red potatoes (chopped)
- ¼ cup white or brown rice (uncooked)
- ½ tsp. chili powder
- 1 cup peas
- ½ tsp. cayenne or jalapeno chilies (diced, optional)
- ½ cup fresh parsley or cilantro (chopped, optional)

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories	225
Total fat	3 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Cholesterol	13 mg
Sodium	38 mg
Carbohydrate	40 g
Dietary fiber	5 g
Total sugars	4 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	10 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	48 mg
Iron	2 mg
Potassium	947 mg

Directions

- 1| In a large pot, brown the onion and garlic in oil over medium to high heat for five minutes.
- 2| Add the chicken to the pot and brown for about five minutes.
- 3| Add the water, potatoes, rice and chili powder.
- 4| Bring the pot to a boil and cook for 15 minutes.
- 5| Lower the heat and cook for about 15-20 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes.
- 6| Add the peas and cook for about eight minutes. If using cayenne or jalapeno chilies, add them too. Mix well.
- 7| Remove the pot from heat. If using parsley or cilantro, add them.
- 8| Mix well and cover for five minutes. Serve hot.