

2ND QUARTER | 2024

Live Well, Work Well



CDC Drops 5-day Isolation Guidance for COVID-19

Presented by
Liberty ISD

In the News



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



CDC Drops 5-day Isolation Guidance for COVID-19

On March 1, 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new guidance for individuals who test positive for the coronavirus. For the first time since 2021, the agency is loosening its COVID-19 isolation guidance to better reflect the evolving risk environment of the virus as hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 drop.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 no longer need to stay home from work and school for five days. Isolation is no longer necessary if the individual has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication and overall symptoms are improving. Once people resume normal activities, they are encouraged to take preventive measures—such as washing their hands often and cleaning frequently touched surfaces—for the next five days to curb the spread of disease.

The CDC further noted that this change streamlines its guidance for respiratory viruses. That means Americans can manage COVID-19 like they do influenza and respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV. While every respiratory virus is different, a common approach to limiting the spread of disease makes the CDC's recommendations easier to follow and more likely to be adopted. Other countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, France and Canada, have implemented similar guidance and found no significant change in the spread of COVID-19.

What Does This Mean For You?

The latest CDC guidance changes reflect the progress made in protecting Americans against severe illness from COVID-19. Regardless, the CDC offers the following tips for reducing the spread of COVID-19:

- Get vaccinated with the latest version of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows and using air purifiers.

People at higher risk for severe complications from COVID-19, such as those who are pregnant or have a weakened immune system, may need to take additional precautions. The CDC recommends that adults 65 and older get a COVID-19 booster shot this spring in anticipation of an uptick in the virus later this summer. Talk to your primary care physician if you have any vaccination questions or concerns.

The Mediterranean Diet Is 2024's Best Diet

U.S. News & World Report named the Mediterranean diet the world's best overall diet for the seventh consecutive year, ranking first in 7 of the 11 diet categories. This diet may help support brain function, promote heart health and regulate blood sugar levels. Research also suggests that this well-balanced eating pattern can help prevent some chronic diseases and increase longevity.

The winning meal plan emulates how people in the Mediterranean region have traditionally eaten, focusing on whole grains and heart-healthy fats. The following foods are encouraged in the Mediterranean diet:

- **Fruits** (e.g., apples, bananas, dates, figs, grapes, melons, oranges, peaches, pears and strawberries)
- **Vegetables** (e.g., broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, cucumbers, kale, spinach, onions, potatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and turnips)
- **Nuts and seeds** (e.g., almonds, almond butter, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pumpkin seeds, peanut butter, sunflower seeds and walnuts)
- **Legumes** (e.g., beans, chickpeas, lentils, peanuts and peas)
- **Whole grains** (e.g., barley, buckwheat, brown rice, corn, oats and whole-wheat bread and pasta)
- **Fish and seafood** (e.g., clams, crab, mussels, oysters, salmon, sardines, shrimp, trout and tuna)
- **Herbs and spices** (e.g., basil, cinnamon, garlic, mint, nutmeg, rosemary and sage)
- **Healthy fats** (e.g., avocados, avocado oil, extra virgin olive oil and olives)



The meal plan also encourages poultry (e.g., chicken, duck and turkey), eggs, cheese and yogurt in moderation. Sweets, red meat and other highly processed foods should be limited.

A nonrestrictive healthy eating regimen such as the Mediterranean diet may be easier to follow and stay committed to. After all, you can start building Mediterranean-inspired meals with foods you already love or by incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your meals and snacks. If you have any questions about your diet, talk to your doctor.

First OTC Birth Control Pill in U.S. Ships to Retailers

Opill, the first oral contraceptive approved for over-the-counter (OTC) use in the United States, has shipped to retailers, becoming available in stores and online in March. Opill will be available at major retailers and pharmacies, including Walgreens and CVS, and online with a suggested retail price of \$19.99 for a one-month supply.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) first approved Opill for all ages in July 2023. Opill contains only one hormone—progestin—as opposed to two. According to the manufacturer, Perrigo, when taken as directed at the same time every day, Opill is 98% effective at preventing pregnancy.

A 2022 Kaiser Family Foundation survey revealed that more than three-quarters (77%) of reproductive-aged women wanted birth control pills to be made available without a prescription. Among those women who said they were likely to use OTC birth control pills, 39% said they were willing and able to pay up to \$10 per month, and 34% said up to \$20 each month. Opill will be available within these price points. The FDA's recent approval for OTC birth control pills has the potential to transform contraceptive access and reproductive health.

Anyone can buy Opill without a prescription as soon as they see the product on store shelves or online. CVS Health says Opill is available at CVS.com and through the CVS Pharmacy starting in late March. Then, more than 7,500 CVS Pharmacy stores will offer the product starting in early April, with the option for same-day delivery and in-store pickup for added privacy and convenience.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about OTC and other available birth control options.



NHO



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



April: Autism Acceptance Month

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships and self-regulation. It's the fastest-growing developmental disability in the country, with 1 in 36 children receiving a diagnosis. With 5.8 million adults also diagnosed with autism, this condition impacts a vast majority of people at home, school, work and in the community.

April is Autism Acceptance Month. Beyond autism awareness, this month aims to highlight the diversity of autistic experiences and needs and serve as a reminder that acceptance can happen daily. One way to accept and include students and employees with autism is to celebrate their differences and focus on their strengths instead of challenges.

Check out autismspeaks.org to learn more about autism and the signs of the condition.

May: Mental Health Awareness Month

An individual's mental health—how one thinks, feels and acts—can change over time due to various factors. Mental illnesses are some of the most common health conditions in the United States. While 1 in 5 adults experiences mental illness each year, less than half of them receive treatment. The stigma around mental health and treatment has long existed, but fortunately, it's becoming less of a taboo topic.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, but prioritizing mental health is essential year-round. If you know someone who is experiencing a mental illness, be supportive, validate what they are going through and minimize judgment about seeking help. Americans can dial 988 for a direct connection to care for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress, including thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or other emotional struggles.

To learn more about mental health conditions and resources, visit nami.org.



June: National Safety Month

Preventable injuries, also known as accidents, are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. The most common preventable injury-related deaths are poisoning, motor vehicle and falls. Other safety concerns include slips, trips and falls. Since accidents can happen anytime, safety is important all the time.

June is National Safety Month. It's important to be prepared to prevent accidents and injuries at home, work or anywhere. For example, to be proactive at home, you could conduct a fire drill or update your first-aid kit to prepare you and your loved ones for emergencies.

Visit nsc.org for more tips on how to stay safe at work and home.

Looking Ahead...

July

UV Safety
Awareness Month

August

Gastroparesis
Awareness Month

September

National
Safety Month

Health and Wellness



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



The Physical and Mental Benefits of Walking

Walking is often overlooked as a form of exercise; however, it offers several health benefits for the body and mind. This simple yet powerful activity is accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels, requiring no special equipment, memberships or training. By boosting physical fitness and enhancing mental well-being, incorporating regular walks into your routine can improve overall health.

Physical Health Benefits of Walking

At its core, walking is a natural, low-impact form of exercise that can yield notable improvements in physical fitness. By simply putting one foot in front of the other, you can unlock a myriad of benefits for your body, including:

- Increased cardiovascular health (e.g., lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels)
- Improved respiratory health
- Strengthened muscles and joints
- Boosted immune function
- Weight management support
- Reduced risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers

Mental Health Benefits of Walking

Beyond its physical benefits, walking also holds immense potential for nurturing one's mental well-being and emotional balance. Consider these benefits:

- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved mood and emotional well-being
- Enhanced cognitive function and reduced risk of cognitive decline and dementia
- Better sleep patterns and quality

Get Walking Today

Whether it's a leisurely stroll through nature or a brisk walk around the block, incorporating regular walks into your routine can improve both body and mind. Walking for 30 minutes at least five days a week is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health and well-being.

Although brisk walking is safe for most people, it's still important to talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program.

Brain Foods That Help You Concentrate

The foods you eat play a role in keeping your brain healthy and can improve mental tasks, such as memory and concentration. Nutritionists recommend eating a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. It's best to get protein from plant sources and fish. When possible, choose healthy fats—such as olive oil or canola oil—instead of saturated fats.

Your brain uses 20% of your body's calories, which means it's even more important to consider what you're eating each day. You can help support overall brain health and boost your concentration by strategically including the following foods or drinks in your daily diet:

- **Fatty fish**, including salmon, trout and sardines, are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s help build brain and nerve cells and are essential for learning and memory. If you're not a fan of fish, ask your doctor about taking an omega-3 supplement.
- **Blueberries** are loaded with antioxidants that may delay brain aging and improve overall function and memory. Blueberries may even delay short-term memory loss while being a great source of several important nutrients.

- **Nuts** contain brain-boosting nutrients, healthy fats and antioxidants. Vitamin E can even help slow mental decline. Eating nuts—specifically walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts—on a regular basis can enhance your memory and recall.
- **Green tea** doesn't contain as much caffeine as coffee, but it has enough caffeine to produce alertness without any jittery effects. Green tea also contains L-theanine, an amino acid that increases brain wave production. Together, the brain-boosting duo of caffeine and L-theanine is proven to increase mood, reaction time and memory.

Additionally, studies have shown that eating breakfast may improve short-term memory and attention. Set yourself up for success and fuel up with a well-balanced breakfast of high-fiber whole grains, dairy and fruits.





Creating a Sleep-friendly Bedroom

Quality sleep is a cornerstone of good health and well-being, yet many struggle to get the restorative rest we need each night. While stress and lifestyle choices often play a significant role in sleep quality, the environment can also promote or hinder one's ability to fall asleep and stay asleep at night. Environmental factors such as light, noise, temperature and comfort all play a crucial role in determining the quality of your rest. Creating a sleep-friendly bedroom promotes relaxation, reduces disturbances and improves overall sleep quality.

Here are some practical tips for transforming your bedroom into a haven for restful sleep:

- **Opt for low lighting.** Invest in blackout curtains or blinds to block out external light sources, and avoid using bright overhead lights in the evening. Instead, opt for soft, dim lighting to signal your body that it's time to wind down.
- **Minimize noise.** Identify sources of noise in your bedroom, such as street traffic or noisy neighbors, and take steps to minimize them. This may involve using earplugs, white noise machines or soundproofing materials to create a quieter sleep environment.
- **Control the temperature.** Keep your bedroom cool and comfortable by adjusting the thermostat or using fans to circulate air. Experiment with different bedding materials to find what works best for you, whether it's lightweight, breathable fabrics for warmer climates or cozy blankets for cooler nights.

- **Invest in comfort.** Choose a mattress and pillows that provide adequate support for your body's unique needs. Replace old or worn-out bedding regularly, and invest in high-quality sheets and pillowcases for added comfort.
- **Declutter and organize.** A clutter-free bedroom can promote a sense of calm and relaxation, making it easier to unwind before bed. Keep surfaces clutter-free, organize belongings and create a peaceful ambiance with minimal decor.
- **Create a relaxing atmosphere.** Incorporate elements that promote relaxation and tranquility, such as calming colors, soothing scents and soft textures. Consider adding plants, essential oil diffusers or gentle background music to create a peaceful ambiance.
- **Establish a bedtime routine.** Develop a consistent bedtime routine to signal your body that it's time to sleep. This may involve activities such as reading, taking a warm bath, or practicing relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation.

With a little effort and attention to detail, you can transform your bedroom into a sanctuary for restful slumber and enjoy the benefits of a good night's sleep.

Recipes



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

Citrus Salmon Fillets

Makes: 4 servings



Ingredients

- 1 pound salmon (3-4 fillets), pat dry
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 red onion (chopped)
- 1 cup baby carrots or sweet potato (chopped)
- ¼ cup parsley (chopped)
- 1 cup orange juice (divided)
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 orange or lemon (cut into wedges, optional)

Nutritional Information (per serving)

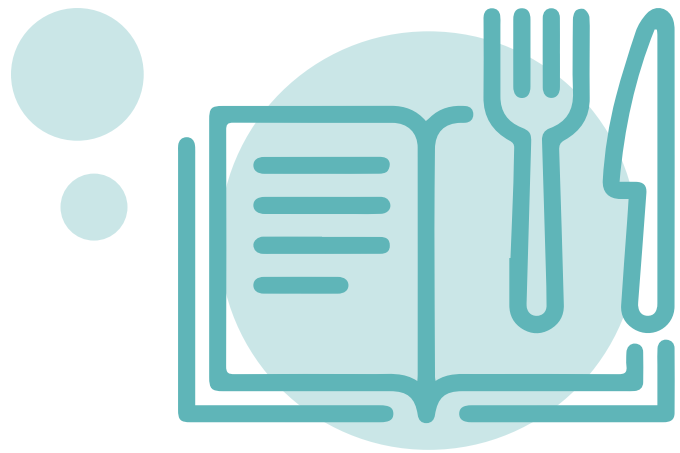
Calories	333
Total fat	19 g
Saturated fat	3 g
Cholesterol	61 mg
Sodium	97 mg
Carbohydrate	18 g
Dietary fiber	2 g
Total sugars	13 g
Added sugars included	4 g
Protein	22 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	47 mg
Iron	1 mg
Potassium	648 mg

Directions

- 1| Preheat oven to 400 F.
- 2| In an oven-safe skillet, heat oil on medium-high heat.
- 3| Add the onion, carrots (or sweet potato), parsley and ½ cup of orange juice. Cook for 5 to 8 minutes.
- 4| Mix ½ cup orange juice and honey in a small bowl.
- 5| In the center of the skillet, add salmon fillets and season with salt and black pepper.
- 6| Pour the orange juice and honey mixture over top.
- 7| Bake the entire skillet in the oven for 16 to 18 minutes or until the fish is flaky.
- 8| Garnish with orange or lemon wedges if using.

Broccoli Salad

Makes: 8 servings



Ingredients

6 cups broccoli (chopped)
 1 cup raisins
 1 medium red onion (peeled and diced)
 2 Tbsp. sugar
 8 bacon slices (cooked and crumbled, optional)
 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup low-fat mayonnaise

Directions

- 1 | Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl. Mix well.
- 2 | Chill for 1 to 2 hours.
- 3 | Serve.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories	174
Total fat	9 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Cholesterol	7 mg
Sodium	198 mg
Carbohydrate	23 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Total sugars	16 g
Added sugars included	3 g
Protein	3 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	44 mg
Iron	1 mg
Potassium	375 mg