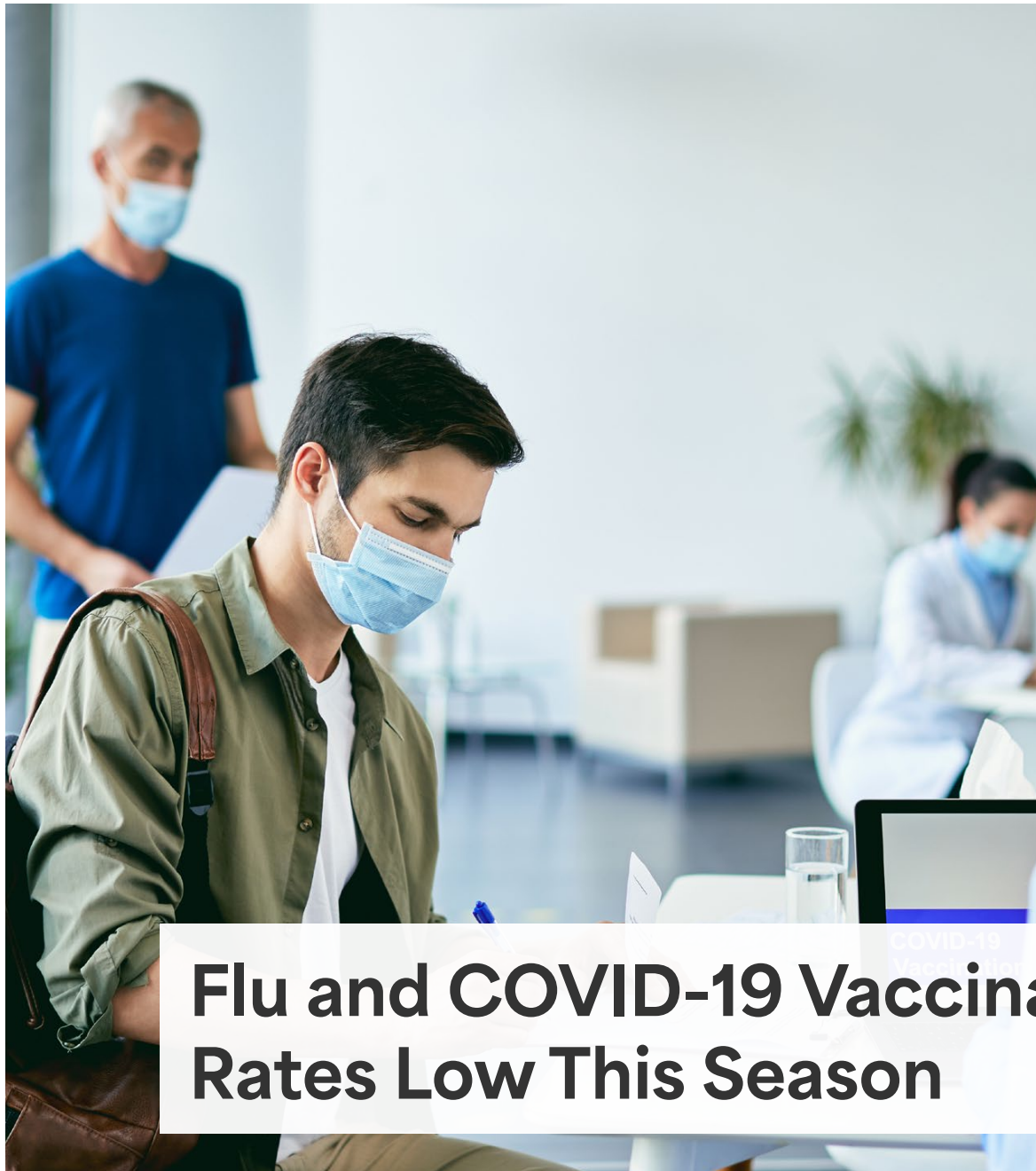


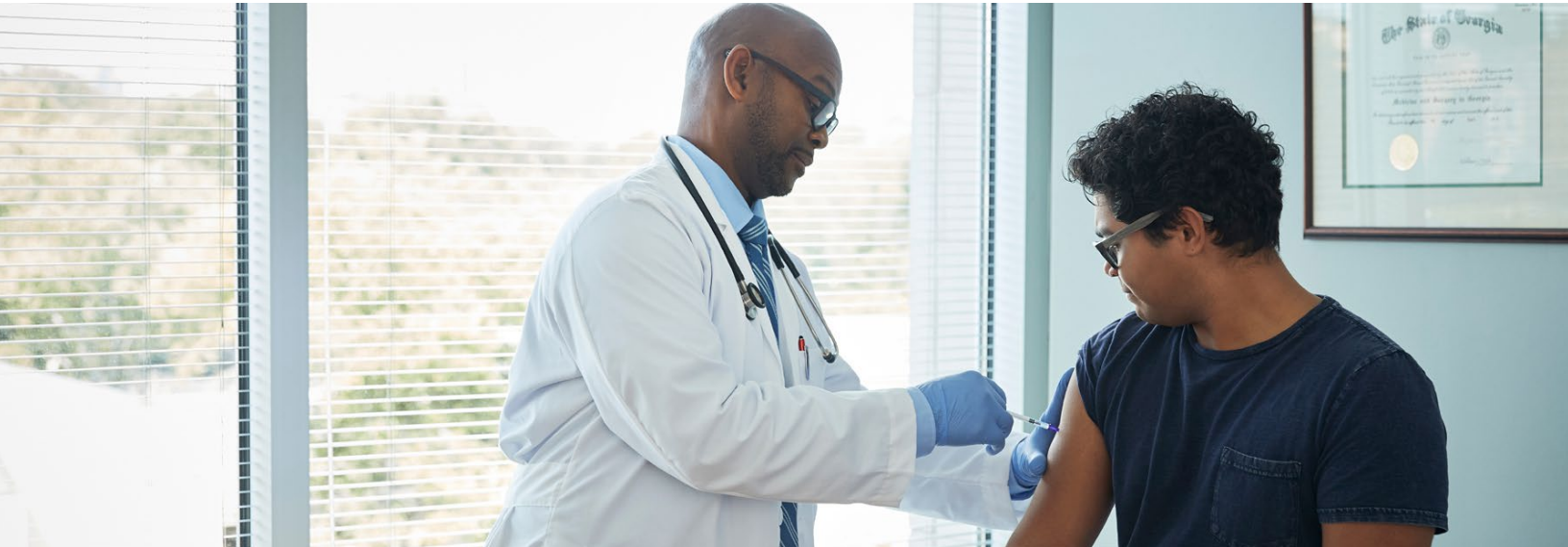
# Live Well, Work Well

Quarterly  
Newsletter



**Flu and COVID-19 Vaccination  
Rates Low This Season**

Q1 2025



# Flu and COVID-19 Vaccination Rates Low This Season

A recent report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed that influenza (flu) and COVID-19 vaccination rates are low for American adults. According to the latest data, just 35% of adults have received the flu shot, and less than 18% have received the latest COVID-19 boosters. The CDC did note that many unvaccinated adults intend to get their shots.

CDC officials noted that a third available vaccine, the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine, is especially important for older adults this season. According to the same data report, almost 40% of people aged 75 or older said they had ever gotten an RSV vaccine. RSV vaccination rates are notably low in nursing home environments, where residents are especially vulnerable.

CDC officials warn that the flu and COVID-19 can cause serious illness, particularly for people aged 65 and up and those with certain medical con-

ditions. Young children can also be at risk from the flu. CDC data reported that there were more than 200 pediatric deaths during the 2023-24 season and that about 80% of those children weren't vaccinated for the flu.

## Keeping Yourself Healthy

In the United States, flu season lasts from October through May, with peak flu activity between December and March. The CDC recommends flu and COVID-19 shots for everyone 6 months and older. 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.

Contact your doctor today to learn more about vaccines and how to keep your household healthy during this respiratory virus season.

# CDC Expands Pneumococcal Vaccine Recommendation to Adults Aged 50-64



On Oct. 23, 2024, the CDC [recommended](#) lowering the age for pneumococcal vaccination from 65 to 50 years old. The agency's earlier vaccination recommendation was for adults 65 or older, children younger than 5, and children and adults with certain conditions.

Pneumococcal bacteria can cause serious illnesses, including pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections. Although pneumococcal disease is common in young children, older adults are at greatest risk of serious illness and death. In fact, the CDC reports that pneumococcal pneumonia kills about 1 in 20 older adults who get it.

According to the agency, lowering the age for pneumococcal vaccination allows more adults to protect themselves from the disease at the age when the risk of infection substantially increases.

## Learn More

Vaccination is an important preventive health care measure, and four vaccines are currently in use to protect against pneumococcal disease. To learn more about pneumococcal disease, visit the CDC's [website](#).

Adults 50 years of age or older should talk with their health care provider to ensure they're up to date with pneumococcal vaccination.



# Vegetable Medleys and Organic Carrots Linked to E. Coli Outbreak

Organic carrots sold at many major grocery stores, including Trader Joe's, Wegmans, Whole Foods and Target, were recently recalled due to concerns over possible E. coli contamination. Grimmway Farms issued the recall on Nov. 16, 2024, and included multiple sizes and brands of bagged organic whole and baby carrots. More recently, the recall was expanded to include organic vegetable medleys.

## What Should Consumers Do?

Although carrots available in stores are no longer suspected of contamination, consumers should carefully inspect any products they may have purchased in recent months. The concern is that while all the products are well past their best-by dates, they might still be in customers' refrigerators or freezers.

In addition to checking and disposing of any carrots that may have been contaminated, consumers should wash and sanitize any items or

surfaces that may have come in contact with the potentially dangerous products.

## Understanding E. Coli

E. coli is spread by ingesting food or water contaminated by human or animal waste or through contact with people or animals. E. coli can have deadly consequences, especially for young children, older adults and those with compromised immune systems.

Symptoms of E. coli include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea, fever, nausea and vomiting. The average incubation period is three to four days, although it can range from 24 hours up to 10 days. Those experiencing E. coli symptoms should contact their doctor or seek medical care.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the recall or for more information on the dangers of E. coli infections.



### January: Thyroid Awareness Month

Your thyroid has an important job within your body. It releases and controls hormones that regulate your metabolism, growth and many other vital bodily functions. However, more than 12% of the U.S. population will develop a thyroid condition during their lifetime, according to the American Thyroid Association.

January is Thyroid Awareness Month. Due to the prevalence of thyroid conditions, it's important to learn about the prevention and treatments of thyroid-related diseases and thyroid cancer.

Check out [thyroid.org](http://thyroid.org) to learn more about thyroid health and the warning signs of a thyroid-related disease.

### February: American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, according to the CDC. Cardiovascular disease and the conditions that lead to it can happen at any age. Some types of heart disease include arrhythmia, heart failure, heart attack and stroke.

February is American Heart Month, a good time to check in on your cardiovascular health. While heart disease can be deadly for adults, it's also preventable in most people. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, an unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.

To learn more about heart health and early warning signs and symptoms of heart disease, visit [heart.org](http://heart.org).

### March: National Nutrition Month

The latest dietary guidelines for Americans emphasize balance; it's not all or nothing. As such, eating right doesn't need to be complicated. Healthy eating starts with nutritional food choices, which include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and dairy. A balanced diet also leaves room for personal preferences.

March is National Nutrition Month. This is a good time to assess your eating habits and educate yourself about the best ways to fuel your body. It comes down to making informed food choices and developing sustainable, healthy eating and physical activity habits.

Visit [myplate.gov](http://myplate.gov) for healthy recipes.

### Looking Ahead

**April:** Alcohol Awareness Month

**May:** Mental Health Awareness Month

**June:** Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

# The Health Benefits of Being Organized

The new year can signal a fresh start for many. As such, January is dubbed Get Organized Month, or GO Month, as many people are eager to tackle their homes' organization. Decluttering can do more for your health than you may realize. Consider the following health benefits of being organized:

- **Boost your energy and productivity.** A messy area may make you feel confused or scattered. When your space is clutter-free, you can focus more on meaningful activities.
- **Reduce your stress and anxiety.** By eliminating clutter, you can feel more in control and able to handle challenges that come your way.
- **Sleep better.** When you keep up with the organization, you can rest easily at night, knowing everything is cleaned up and in its place.
- **Eat healthier.** Not only does snack and food organization reduce clutter, but it can also help you quickly grab healthy options and control portions.

January is a great time to get organized and set yourself up for a clutter-free year, which may help you feel more balanced.



# Embracing a Digital Detox

Technology has become such an integral part of life that it may be hard to imagine functioning without it. Beyond work, people depend on technological devices for information, communication and entertainment. However, constant attachment to these devices can have harmful effects on your mental health. To combat these issues, you may consider a digital detox. The National Institutes of Health defines “digital detox” as a disconnection from devices or social media for a defined duration.

Taking a break from digital devices is crucial to maintain balance and overall well-being. It helps reduce stress and improves sleep quality. When you step away from technology, you become fully present for yourself and others, allowing for more meaningful social connections. Furthermore, a digital detox can have significant mental health benefits; studies show that people who refrained from social media reported lower stress levels and improved self-image. Additionally, taking a technology timeout allows you to be mindful of your online habits and form healthier routines, ultimately leading to higher productivity.

Try these strategies for an effective digital detox:

- **Turn off notifications.** Notifications are distracting and can hinder productivity. Consider turning off as many as you can to minimize interruptions.
- **Use digital detox tools.** Many devices have built-in tools that can silence notifications or disable apps for a certain period. Research shows that those who use digital detox tools (e.g., iOS Screen Time or Google Play’s Digital Wellbeing) are less apt to use their smartphones compulsively and, thus, more likely to avoid the negative effects of social media.
- **Start your day tech-free.** Many people pick up their phones and start scrolling when they wake up, but Stanford Lifestyle Medicine Program experts say this behavior activates the fight-or-flight response. This not only creates a sense of anxiety but also conditions the brain to be more hypervigilant. Instead, use the first hour of the day for activities such as exercising, spending time outside or preparing a healthy breakfast. The goal is to create a morning routine that sets a positive tone for the day and supports brain health.
- **Take periodic breaks from technology.** Eliminating the use of all digital devices may not be realistic, especially if you use them for work. Instead, set limits for how much time you spend on social media each day or designate certain times for phone use. You can also consider ways to make small changes, such as chatting with someone face-to-face rather than using your phone.
- **Create gadget-free zones.** Designate areas in your home, such as dining rooms and bedrooms, where gadgets are not allowed. This will allow you to be more present and encourage tech-free activities such as baking, reading, doing crafts, and playing cards or board games.
- **Reach out for support.** Family and friends can offer emotional support during your digital detox. They can hold you accountable and motivate you when you struggle to achieve your goals.

While technological devices aren’t inherently harmful, overuse can negatively affect one’s physical and mental well-being. A digital detox can help you break unhealthy habits and embrace more balanced, healthier alternatives.



# Getting Enough Vitamin D During the Winter

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin essential for calcium absorption, bone health and disease resistance. However, it can be challenging to absorb sufficient levels during the winter months. As such, vitamin D supplementation is prevalent in the United States, with 20% of adults taking a dietary supplement containing this vitamin.

There are multiple forms of vitamin D, with D2 (ergocalciferol) and D3 (cholecalciferol) being the most important. The vitamin D2 supplement is plant-derived, whereas D3 typically comes from animals. Your skin can produce vitamin D when exposed to UVB rays. However, various factors—such as skin tone, age, geographical location, sunscreen and clothing—can impact the process. Vitamin D dietary supplements are also an increasingly popular way to get more vitamin D, especially during the winter months when the days are shorter. Some doctors may prescribe over-the-counter vitamin D supplements to patients. Prescription-strength vitamin D contains a higher dose.

## Vitamin D3 Supplements

Vitamin D3 supplements can be particularly useful for individuals with limited sun exposure or dietary intake of the vitamin. Research suggests that D3 may be more effective at raising and maintaining overall vitamin D levels than D2 supplements. As such, doctors often recommend D3 to those who need vitamin D supplements.

Vitamin D3 supplements are taken by mouth as directed by a doctor or pharmacist. Forms

of these supplements include capsules, gummies, liquid products, powders, and dissolving or chewable tablets. Since vitamin D is fat-soluble, it's best absorbed with a meal with some fat. Vitamin D usually has no side effects at average recommended doses, so it's crucial to contact your doctor immediately if you experience anything unusual.

It's important to purchase high-quality supplements that have been independently tested. Nutritional supplements aren't regulated in the United States, which can negatively impact supplement quality.

While dietary supplements, including vitamin D3, can be beneficial, they can cause harm when used unnecessarily. For this reason, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends that all consumers consult their doctor or pharmacist before taking supplements. It is possible to get too much vitamin D. When you overdose on vitamin D, calcium builds up in your blood. This condition, known as hypercalcemia, can cause nausea, vomiting, weakness, decreased appetite, constipation and frequent urination. Vitamin D toxicity also has the potential to progress to irregular heart rhythms, kidney stones and even kidney failure.

Talk to a health care professional to learn more about vitamin D and other essential nutrients. They can check your body's vitamin D levels and help you determine if dietary supplements are right for you.



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

# Three-can Chili

Makes: **6 servings**

## Ingredients

- 15.5-oz. can low-sodium pinto, kidney, red or black beans (undrained)
- 15-oz. can corn (drained)
- 14.5-oz. can low-sodium crushed tomatoes (undrained)
- Chili powder (to taste)

## Directions

1. Place the contents of all three cans into a pan.
2. Add chili powder, to taste.
3. Stir to mix.
4. Continue to stir over medium heat until heated thoroughly.
5. Refrigerate any leftovers.

## Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories	118
Total fat	1 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Sodium	215 mg
Carbohydrate	24 g
Dietary fiber	7 g
Total sugars	3 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	6 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	50 mg
Iron	2 mg
Potassium	429 mg

# Lemon Pepper Salmon Patties

Makes: **5 servings**

## Ingredients

- ¾ cup breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup reduced-fat mayonnaise
- 1 egg (slightly beaten)
- ½ tsp. lemon pepper
- 7 oz. frozen salmon (thawed, drained and finely chopped; optional to remove the skin)
- Cooking spray

## Directions

1. Mix the breadcrumbs, mayonnaise, egg and lemon pepper in a medium bowl. Add the salmon and mix.
2. Measure 1/3 cup of salmon mixture (packed) and form into a round patty. Repeat until you have 5 salmon patties.
3. Spray a skillet with cooking spray and set the stove to medium heat.
4. Place the salmon patties in the skillet and cook until light brown, 5-7 minutes. Flip the patties and cook on the other side until brown. Salmon should reach a final internal cook temperature of 145 F as measured with a food thermometer before serving.

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## Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories	190
Total fat	11 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Cholesterol	62 mg
Sodium	246 mg
Carbohydrate	12 g
Dietary fiber	1 g
Total sugars	1 g
Added sugars included	1 g
Protein	11 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	41 mg
Iron	1 mg
Potassium	182 mg