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# Wellness Matters

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Your Healthy Body

## Protect Your Health: Mindfulness

We all know that prolonged and chronic stress can wreak havoc on your overall health and mental wellness, so it's important to find healthy ways to manage it. One effective way to do so is to practice mindfulness.

**The Basics** Mindfulness is the process of bringing your full attention to experiences in the present moment. Being mindful means being aware of where you are and what you're doing, as well as not being reactive or overwhelmed with what's going on around you. Many achieve mindfulness through meditation and yoga.

**Getting Started** Mastering meditation takes practice, but getting started can be easy and not time-consuming. Try the following quick mindful meditation techniques next time you're feeling stressed.

- **One-minute relaxation breathing:** close your eyes, breathe in deeply for a count of four, and then exhale for a count of eight; repeat five times.
- **Five-minute body scan meditation:** sit or lay down in a

comfortable position and take a few moments to find a calm, steady breath. Focus your awareness to muscles in your body; spend several slow breaths

Don't just look, observe.  
 Don't just swallow, taste.  
 Don't just sleep, dream.  
 Don't just think, feel.  
 Don't just exist, live.

on each focal point beginning with the left toes and all the way through the left hip. Repeat on the other side. From

there, follow the same process through your torso, arms, and up through your neck.

- **Mindful appreciation:** A simple exercise, just take note of five things throughout your day that are usually unappreciated. These could be people or objects, whichever you choose. Focus on each of these seemingly insignificant things for a moment; for instance, the electricity that powers your hot water, your hearing that allows you to enjoy birds singing, the cashier at your coffee shop, etc. Consider how these things make your life more enjoyable and meaningful.

Regularly reducing stress through mindfulness or other healthy means lowers your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, depression, and more. Take time to be mindful today.

### Cataract Facts

Cataracts are well-known to older Americans, affecting over half by age 80. There are roughly 22 million Americans over age 40 with cataracts, according to the organization [Prevent Blindness](#), but the condition can affect all ages, even newborns.

Cataracts cloud the eye and alter the passage of light, causing dim and blurry vision; severe cataracts can even cause blindness. Other symptoms include double vision or a milky spot on the pupil. The exact cause is unknown, but cataracts are linked to aging, smoking, eye injuries, or long exposure to ultraviolet rays.

Learn more on the [facts and myths](#) about cataracts--keep your eyesight safe!

## Cold or Flu?

Though the common cold and seasonal influenza share several symptoms, there are differences that will help you identify which you may have in order to seek proper treatment. It is important to tell the difference, as the flu can result in more serious health complications, while the cold likely will not.

### Common Cold

Typically, symptoms of the common cold come on gradually, and may start with a sore throat or irritated sinuses. The most common symptoms of a cold are nasal congestion, sneezing, and runny nose. Symptoms can also include a cough, mild headache and minor body aches. Young children may get a low-grade fever as well, but a fever in older children or adults typically indicates the flu.

People are generally contagious during the first three days they have a cold. Symptoms tend to go away within a week.

### Seasonal Flu

Unlike the common cold, flu symptoms usually come on suddenly and vigorously, often starting with a high-grade fever, headache, body aches, and fatigue. Symptoms can also include a dry cough, sore throat, and sometimes a runny or stuffy nose.

Symptoms are generally more severe than with a cold. Flu symptoms tend to gradually improve after two to five days, but can last for a week or more. You should stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone to avoid passing your illness to others.

### Treatment

For the common cold, a doctor visit is usually unnecessary. Over-the-counter medications can be effective in treating symptoms. For the flu, a doctor may prescribe anti-viral drugs that will help decrease the severity and length of symptoms.

Potentially serious health complications can occur in people suffering from the flu. Call your doctor if you think your symptoms are worsening or if you have a condition such as asthma, diabetes, or are pregnant.



## Healthy & Delicious

### Cutting Meat Consumption

According to scientists at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, consuming high amounts of meat has negative health effects.

Their survey found that 55 percent of respondents were reducing their consumption of processed meat and 41 percent were cutting back on red meat consumption. When asked what their reasoning for cutting back was, the majority of respondents said their decision stemmed from wanting to save money or improve their health.

Other than cutting meat from your diet altogether, there are strategies that can mitigate the negative health effects of meat consumption while still getting the protein you need:

- Make meat a minor player in your meals; eat more fruits and vegetables instead.
- Trim the fat and skin from meats and poultry.
- Forgo fatty cuts of beef, pork, and lamb.
- Avoid eating cholesterol-rich meats such as liver, brains, and kidneys.
- When eating out, opt for a smaller meat portion or choose a vegetarian dish.
- Replace meat with fish dishes.

Consult your doctor to find out if reducing or removing meat from your diet could be beneficial for you.