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Wellness Matters

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Good Health

Celebrate the Holidays Safely

As we approach the second holiday season during the pandemic, it's important to familiarize yourself with the recent CDC [guidelines](#) for safer gatherings.

How to Gather

If planning to attend a holiday gathering, play it safe:

- If not already, get vaccinated if you're eligible—it's the best protection for yourself and those not yet eligible for the vaccine, like young children.
- Consider the location of the gathering. Celebrating outdoors is safer than indoors; avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wear a well-fitting mask over your mouth and nose indoors, particularly if you are not fully vaccinated. Remember not to put a mask on children younger than 2 years old.
- Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

- Stay home if you're sick or have COVID-19 symptoms. You may choose to wear a mask—regardless of the level of transmission—if someone at your gathering has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated.



Furthermore, those with a medical condition or who take medications that weaken their immune system may not be fully protected even if they're fully vaccinated and have received an additional dose. Such people should take the same precautions recommended for

unvaccinated people, including wearing a well-fitting mask, until advised otherwise by their health care provider.

If gathering with a group from multiple households and potentially from different parts of the country, consider extra precautions (e.g., avoiding crowded indoor spaces before travel, taking a test) in advance of gathering to reduce risk further.

How to Travel

The CDC continues to [recommend](#) delaying holiday travel like flying unless fully vaccinated. If you're not fully vaccinated or traveling with children who aren't yet eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, choose other travel methods, like driving. Keep in mind that all travelers—even if fully vaccinated—must wear masks on public transportation. If you're unvaccinated and traveling, the CDC has published added safety [tips](#).

The Importance of Sleep

Although we gain an extra hour of sleep with the end of daylight savings time this month, the slight shift could impact your sleep cycle for up to a week. You may wake up earlier, have trouble falling asleep, or even wake up often during the night.

Adults should get seven hours or more of sleep each night, according to the CDC. However, only 2 in 3 American adults get enough sleep. Sleep is essential for maintaining a healthy, productive, and low-stress lifestyle. Here are a few benefits of getting a good night's sleep:

1. Increased productivity and work

performance—Giving your body enough time to go through all the sleep stages is necessary for energy, muscle repair, improved memory, and the release and regulation of important hormones essential for everyday functions.

2. Boosted immune system

—Consistent sleep strengthens your immune system, allowing for effective immune function. The immune system is critical to overall health, specifically for healing wounds, defending against infections and protecting against chronic illnesses.

3. Improved mental health

—Getting enough sleep can help alleviate feelings of fatigue that may contribute to stress, depression and anxiety. Symptoms of fatigue can be drowsiness, loss of energy and mood swings.

As our clocks fall back one hour, this is a prime opportunity to fall back into good sleep habits. For more information on how to improve sleep habits or to address sleep issues, contact your doctor today.

3 Steps to Better Sleep



Avoid electronics
before bedtime.



Pass up caffeine after
midday.



Establish a consistent
sleep routine.



Healthy & Nutritious

A Guide to Meal Prepping

Meal prepping is the concept of preparing whole meals for the week ahead. It can lead to more nutritious meal choices since you're deciding on meals ahead of time. Consider the following tips to streamline the meal prep process:

- Stick to a schedule for when you plan, grocery shop, and prep your meals.
- Pick recipes with varying cooking methods (e.g., oven or stovetop).
- Make a complete shopping list so you are fully prepared.
- Choose which meals to prepare first based on their cook times.
- Store meals properly in portioned containers.
- Refrigerate meals you're planning to eat within three to four days and freeze the remaining meals.

Meal prep doesn't have to be intimidating. The first week or two of prepping may take more effort than you'd like, but with practice it will get easier and quicker. You may even venture into prepping healthy breakfasts and snacks. So cut down on cooking time—and have more time for other activities.