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Wellness Matters

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Good Health

Navigating Flu Season

Influenza season typically runs from October through April, but you can get the flu at any time of the year. The United States experienced a light flu season last year due to the preventive health and safety measures in place for COVID-19. Health experts warn that since fewer people developed immunity to the previous year's flu strains, more could be susceptible to influenza this year.

With emerging variants of coronavirus spreading across the United States and traditional flu season ramping up, it's crucial to get a flu vaccination. Experts assure that there is no harm in getting a flu shot in addition to a COVID-19 vaccine. Plus, it's still important to practice good hygiene—such as washing your hands with soap and water, covering coughs or sneezes, and avoiding others when you feel sick.

Prevalence of the Flu

The flu is so common that the

number of people infected each season can only be estimated. However, it is more prevalent in certain age groups. One clinical diseases study broke down the infection rate across age groups as follows:

- Children ages 0 to 17: 9.3%
- Adults ages 18-64 years: 8.8%
- Adults ages 65 and older: 3.9%



Flu Symptoms

Those with flu can feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches

- Headaches
- Fatigue

In some cases, particularly in children, vomiting and diarrhea can occur. Since many flu and COVID-19 symptoms can overlap, testing may be needed to confirm a diagnosis.

Flu Prevention

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated. This year, due to COVID-19, it's more important than ever. The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) recommends that anyone over the age of 6 months should get an annual flu vaccine. To keep yourself safe, you should also:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water often or use an alcohol-based sanitizer when handwashing isn't possible.

Breast Cancer Awareness

According to the World Health Organization, breast cancer became the most common cancer this year, accounting for 12% of all new cancer cases worldwide. In addition, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among American women. However, some men are also at risk for breast cancer.

The main factors that influence your risk of breast cancer include being a woman and getting older. Additional risk factors that are out of your control include genetic mutations, exposure to radiation therapy, your reproductive history and your family history.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. As such, this is the perfect time to refamiliarize yourself with the following warning signs of breast cancer:

1. Any change in the size or the shape of the breast
2. New lumps in the breast or underarm
3. Pain, thickening or swelling in any area of the breast
4. Irritation or dimpling of breast skin
5. Nipple discharge other than breast milk

Screenings can't prevent cancer, but early detection can make treatment more effective. Women ages 45 to 54 should get a mammogram each year, while women age 55 and older can switch to biennial screening. For more information about breast cancer risk factors, talk to your doctor or visit breastcancer.org.

Breast Cancer Prevention Tips

Research shows that making these lifestyle changes can help decrease your risk of breast cancer:



Limiting your alcohol intake



Maintaining a healthy weight



Exercising regularly



Healthy & Nutritious Eating Organic

According to the Organic Trade Association (OTA), eating organic foods is not only healthier for your body, it is also better for society and less expensive in the long run.

Organic foods are farmed or processed in an earth-friendly manner. *Organic* applies to agricultural products, meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Instead of traditional farming techniques, farmers control weeds and pests using environmentally safe practices that not only benefit the earth but also our health.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulates the use, definition, and meaning of the word “organic” on food labels. Federal standards restrict and prohibit the use of:

- Synthetic fertilizers and pesticides
- Sewer sludge fertilizers
- Genetic engineering and growth hormones
- Irradiation
- Antibiotics and artificial ingredients

Why opt for organic foods? Unlike traditional agricultural foods, organic products are grown without pesticides, which potentially contain cancer-causing agents and heavy metals that can cause nerve damage.