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Wellness Matters

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Your Wellness Journey

Relaxed CDC Pandemic Guidance

In August, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new COVID-19 community guidance that ends or eases several key recommendations. The updated guidance shows how much has changed since the pandemic began more than two years ago. The agency stated that nearly the entire U.S. population has some COVID-19 immunity through vaccination, previous infection, or both.

Altered Guidelines The CDC altered some recommendations that have been in place since the early days of the pandemic:

- **Social distancing:** people no longer need to stay at least 6 feet away from other people to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus.
- **Quarantining:** people exposed to the virus no longer need to quarantine at home, regardless of vaccination status. However, they should still wear a mask for 10 days and get tested on day five.

- **Testing:** routine testing of people without symptoms is no longer recommended in most settings. Contact tracing and testing should be limited to hospitals and certain high-risk group living situations (e.g., nursing homes and prisons).



The CDC continues to recommend wearing a mask indoors in areas where the COVID-19 community level is high. The agency also reiterated that regardless of vaccination status, people should isolate themselves from others when they have COVID-19, staying home for at least five days.

What Does This Mean? These changes essentially shift the

responsibility for COVID-19 risk reduction from institutions to individuals. So here are some things to keep in mind to reduce your risk, especially over the upcoming holiday season:

- **Get vaccinated.** The [CDC](#) recommends that everyone stay current with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. Plus, October is one of the best months to get the influenza shot to protect against various strains of the seasonal flu.
- **Stay home when sick.** It's best to stay home when feeling unwell; avoid close contact with others who are sick.
- **Test when unsure.** Because flu and COVID-19 symptoms are similar, it's best to test to identify your illness.
- **Understand your risk.** The CDC has information about [understanding COVID-19 risks](#) to help you make the best decisions to stay healthy.

As we navigate everyday life with fewer community guidelines, take precautions to protect yourself and others.

Plan Now for Stress-free Holidays

While the holiday season often brings joy and togetherness, it can also cause stress for many individuals. Top holiday stressors include budgeting, managing multiple commitments, and finding the perfect gifts. Fortunately, by getting organized and planning out what you can do ahead of time, you can help reduce holiday stress. Consider the following tips:

- **Write down any known commitments.** Are you planning on hosting a holiday dinner? Does your child's school have a seasonal concert? Making a list of your commitments will help you plan your time accordingly and avoid double-booking yourself.
- **Create your budget now.** If you're stressed about how your holiday spending will impact you after the season is over, you're not alone. Remember that the sentiment of a gift is much more important than the cost. As such, be sure to set a realistic budget for gifts and stick to it.
- **Start shopping early.** Don't be afraid to shop early. Sometimes, you can get great deals on gifts even before the holiday season hits. Plus, you can avoid the scenario of not being able to get the gift you want because it's sold out.

By keeping these tips in mind, you'll be on your way to a stress-free holiday season.



Healthy & Nutritious A Low-Stress Diet

Even though your job or family life may be the main source of stress in your life, your diet can also contribute to emotional turmoil. According to the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA), as you become increasingly stressed, the following occurs:

- Vital nutrients deplete in the body and are generally not replaced because of stress-prone eating habits.
- Individuals gravitate toward foods that promote a stress response to fulfill a need. These foods include refined sugar, processed flour, salt, and caffeine. These foods can compromise your immune system.

Many stressed individuals eat poorly because they do not have time to find healthy ways to replenish their bodies, or they crave junk food during stressful experiences. To avoid stress food traps, consider these healthy eating tips:

- Eat a diet rich in foods of many colors, such as vegetables.
- Select foods that are high in antioxidants, like broccoli, carrots, whole grains, spinach, and any kind of berries.
- Drink filtered water to keep you hydrated.
- Reduce or eliminate your caffeine intake.
- Consume at least 30 to 40 grams of fiber each day. Good sources of fiber include apples, peas, and bran cereal.
- Add omega-3 fatty acids to your diet, either with a supplement or in foods such as salmon, walnuts, shrimp, and soybeans.

