

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

Protect Yourself During Flu Season

Here comes fall. The days are getting cooler and shorter, the kids are back in school, and pumpkin spice lattes are back. You know what else is back? Flu season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend an annual flu vaccine to reduce the risk of catching the flu and lower your risk of developing serious complications if you do get the flu.

In addition to getting your annual flu shot, protect yourself by social distancing, covering your mouth when you cough, frequent hand-washing and adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors. Here are five ways to boost your immune system and overall health.

1. Eat healthy. Eat nutrient dense foods that contain fiber and a healthy amount of these immune system boosting vitamins:

- Vitamin B6 – poultry, salmon, chickpeas, eggs, sweet potato, and avocado
- Vitamin C – citrus fruits, kiwi, strawberries, broccoli, and tomato
- Vitamin E – almonds, sunflower seeds, and spinach

2. Exercise regularly. Get 30 minutes of moderate exercise



daily. A half hour walk improves physical and mental health.

3. Hydrate. We lose water through normal bodily functions like breathing, sweating, and urinating. Replenish your body with fresh water daily. Drink more if you are doing strenuous exercise or plan to be outdoors in the heat.

4. Minimize stress. Recognize your signs of stress and learn how to manage it. Chronic ongoing stress suppresses the immune system. Take a break every couple of hours for a few minutes of quiet time, deep breathing, or meditation.

5. Get plenty of sleep. Studies show people who lack quality sleep consistently over time are more at risk for illness. Practice

good sleep hygiene – make the bedroom dark, quiet, cool, and free of any distractions at bedtime. Wind down 30 – 45 minutes before sleep to free yourself from the day's stressors. Write down tomorrow's to-do list so you don't go to bed with things on your mind that keep you awake and unable to get restorative sleep.

Most Florida Blue members 18 and older can get a flu shot at no extra cost from in-network pharmacies including Walgreens, Publix, Winn-Dixie, and Walmart. Some [Florida Blue Centers](#) are also offering flu vaccination events. To see if there's an event near you, call 1-877-352-5830. Children 6 months to 17 years old can be vaccinated at any in-network doctor's office.

Resources: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov); [Medlineplus.gov](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/); [Webmd.com](https://www.webmd.com)

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Breast Cancer Awareness

Did you know breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women? While most breast cancer occurs in women over 50 years of age, women under 50, and even men, need to be aware of the risk factors and symptoms.

Here are some symptoms of breast cancer. If you have any of these symptoms, see your primary care provider. Keep in mind some people may experience different symptoms, or even no symptoms at all.

- Changes to the size or shape of the breast, including dimpling
- Any pain in the breast area
- Any discharge from the breast, except breast milk
- Any lumps in the breast or underarm area

Resource: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)



Women of average risk should begin mammography screening at age 50. If you have any risk factors, such as carrying the gene for breast cancer or having a mother or sister that was diagnosed with breast cancer, work with your primary care provider to determine when you should begin mammograms.

Here are some ways you can lower your risk for breast cancer:

- Limit your alcohol intake or don't drink at all

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly
- Ask your doctor about the risks of using birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy
- Breastfeed, if possible

Breast cancer screening cannot prevent breast cancer, but it can detect breast cancer earlier when it's easier to treat. Talk to your doctor about when you should begin breast cancer screenings.

Blueberry Avocado Smoothie (Serves 1)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup blueberries
- ½ avocado, pitted and sliced
- 5 dates, pitted and roughly chopped
- 1 cup unsweetened vanilla coconut milk

Directions

Add blueberries, avocado, dates and coconut milk to a blender. Blend on medium-low speed, using the tamper as necessary, until well combined. Increase speed to medium-high and blend until very smooth.

Recipe courtesy of [Eatingwell.com](https://www.eatingwell.com); for nutritional information click [here](#).



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