

Live Well, Work Well

Q4

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In the News

Catch up on the latest developments of the most significant health care news from the past three months.



What Relaxed CDC COVID-19 Guidance Means for the Holidays

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.

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 It Mean?

These changes essentially shift responsibility for COVID-19 risk reduction from institutions to individuals. As such, here are some things to keep in mind when preparing for the holidays and gathering with family and friends:

- **Get vaccinated.** The CDC [recommends](#) that everyone stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination, including boosters. October is also one of the best months to get the influenza (flu) shot and protect against various strains of the seasonal flu.
- **Stay home when sick.** It's important to stay home when feeling unwell, no matter the symptoms, and avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- **Test when unsure.** Because flu and COVID-19 symptoms are similar, doctors say it's best to get tested to know what it is.
- **Understand the risk.** The CDC has information about [understanding the risk](#) of COVID-19 to help Americans make decisions to stay healthy.

As people navigate everyday life with fewer community guidelines, it's important to take precautions to protect oneself and others and contact a doctor with any health concerns.



FDA Approves Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently [finalized a rule](#) establishing a new category of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids for people age 18 and older with mild to moderate hearing impairment. This will enable millions of Americans to buy hearing aids online and in retail stores without needing to see a doctor for an exam or a prescription or visit an audiologist for a fitting adjustment.

The long-awaited rule, effective mid-October, applies to certain air-conduction hearing aids. Hearing aids for severe hearing impairment in those ages 17 and younger will remain prescription devices under the new rule. The FDA's change follows years of pressure from medical experts and consumer advocates to make hearing devices cheaper and more accessible.

Hearing Loss in the United States

Hearing loss is associated with cognitive decline, depression, isolation and other health problems in older adults. The FDA estimates that about 30 million Americans experience hearing loss, but only about one-fifth of people with hearing problems use the devices currently. The cost of hearing aids is often a big hurdle for consumers, as they can pay up to thousands of dollars for the device itself, audiologist visits and fitting services. Furthermore, limited insurance coverage is a barrier to receiving hearing help, and Medicare doesn't pay for hearing aids, only diagnostic tests.

What's Next?

These FDA's final rule could help create a more competitive market for hearing aids and potentially make it a broader field with less costly and more innovative designs. Currently, the industry is dominated by a relatively small number of manufacturers. The rule also makes OTC options for hearing aids available for eligible consumers.

If you have any concerns or questions about your hearing, contact your doctor.



Nearly 100 Million Americans Struggle to Afford Health Care Costs

A Gallup and West Health poll found that 38% of American adults—an estimated 98 million—are forced to choose between health care and other basic needs. Rising health care prices are driving people to delay or skip medical care, drive less, skip meals and borrow money.

The latest Gallup survey was conducted in June, the same month the U.S. consumer price index reached record-high numbers for inflation. Rising health care costs are not a new challenge; however, inflation is putting additional pressure on Americans' spending and savings.

Specifically, the survey asked respondents what they have cut back on in the last six months due to the higher prices of goods and services. Seventy percent of people reported they have changed their behaviors and reported doing one or more of the following:

- Driving less (59%)
- Cutting back on utilities (30%)
- Delaying or avoiding medical care or purchasing prescription drugs (21%)
- Skipping a meal (19%)
- Borrowing money (13%)

What Can Consumers Do?

Some actions have been taken to try to stem the tide of rising costs, but the reality is that not much will change soon. People will likely continue to make tradeoffs as inflation impacts consumer spending habits. To deal with the current economic uncertainty, it's best for people to focus on what they can control: their budgets and saving and spending habits. It can also be helpful to discuss financial and investment goals with a financial advisor.





NHO

Learn more about the three
upcoming national health observances
in this section.



October: Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer is the second-leading type of cancer among American women, behind skin cancer. Nearly 1 in 8 women will develop breast cancer during their lives—the disease can also affect men, although it's considered rare.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, meaning now is when you should learn about this serious disease, its risk factors and symptoms. While most breast cancer cases are found among women ages 50 and older, the disease can develop sooner. Risk factors for breast cancer include age, family history and prior radiation therapy treatment. Symptoms of breast cancer include changes in breast size and shape and pain and lumps in the breast.

These lists are nonexhaustive; your doctor can tell you more about risk factors and ways to detect breast cancer, including how to conduct a breast self-exam. They can also tell you whether routine breast cancer screenings are right for you.

To learn more about breast cancer, visit nationalbreastcancer.org.





November: American Diabetes Month

Diabetes comes in two forms: Type 1 and Type 2. While Type 2 diabetes is far more common, both can be deadly, as they affect the body's insulin production. Over 34 million U.S. adults have some form of diabetes, and 1 in 5 don't even know it, according to the CDC.

November is American Diabetes Month, so take the time to learn more about this serious disease. To help maintain your health, it's important to understand diabetes risk factors and symptoms first. Unfortunately, little is known about why people develop diabetes. For Type 1 diabetes, health experts believe family history and age may play a role. For Type 2 diabetes, the risk factors are a bit clearer; they include being overweight, not exercising and having a family history of diabetes.

Diabetes symptoms include frequent urination (especially at night), blurry vision, weight loss without effort, slow-healing sores and an unquenchable thirst. Talk with your doctor if you're concerned about your diabetes risks or potential symptoms.

While Type 1 diabetes is often genetic, Type 2 diabetes is entirely preventable; eating healthy and exercising have been proven to prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes. Visit diabetes.org to learn more, or talk to your doctor about any concerns about diabetes.



December: National Safe Toys and Gifts Month

The holidays are a time to gather with loved ones, eat comfort food and share thoughtful gifts. Unfortunately, sometimes even the most well-intentioned gifts can come with unforeseen risks.

December is National Safe Toys and Gifts Month, making it the ideal time to think about a gift before giving it. One of the biggest risks during this time of year is giving young children toys with potentially dangerous components, such as small parts that can be swallowed. Here are some general tips for selecting appropriate gifts:

- Check toy labels to see what age ranges they're intended for, and follow those guidelines.
- Consider avoiding toys with small parts that can be swallowed or projectiles that have the potential to injure or cause blindness.
- Avoid toys with heating elements and other potential fire hazards.
- Avoid toys with ropes or long elements that can cause choking.
- Ensure any art supplies given say "nontoxic" on the packaging.

Additionally, if you intend to gift sporting equipment or similar gear, it's important to also provide protective gear, such as helmets and knee pads. Periodically check for safety recalls and warnings at recalls.gov.

Looking Ahead...

JanuaryThyroid
Awareness Month**February**American
Heart Month**March**National
Nutrition Month



Health and Wellness

Remain on top of the latest trends in health and wellness with the three articles in this section.



Beat the 2022-23 Seasonal Flu

Flu season lasts from October through May in the United States, with peak flu activity happening between December and March. The country's flu activity has been unusual since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which could pose consequences for the upcoming season.

Flu season in the Southern Hemisphere may indicate what's to come in the United States. In particular, Australia has been experiencing an unusual surge in flu activity early in the season. Health experts now warn the same could happen in the United States later this year.

To help families stay healthy this flu season, the CDC recommends that anyone 6 months of age and older get a flu shot yearly. September and October are the best months to get vaccinated against the flu, so don't delay getting the shot. Contact your doctor today to learn more about this year's flu vaccines.





Prioritizing Mental Health Amid Inflation-related Anxiety

Financial stress can be a burden and negatively impact your mental health. During this period of increased inflation, it is imperative to understand the relationship between financial and mental wellness so you improve both areas of your life. Consider the following tips:

- **Reframe your mindset.** Shifting your perspective on inflation can be helpful. Try thinking about it like the weather: You may not be able to control the weather, but you can dress for it. Similarly, you can prepare for inflation by starting an emergency fund, limiting leisure spending and making other changes to your budget.
- **Lean on family and friends.** Talking with those close to you can help you stay grounded and reduce feelings of anxiety. Inflation can affect anyone, so it can help to talk with those you love about the struggles you are all likely facing.

- **Seek professional help.** Waiting to get help when you need it will only lead to worse mental—and possibly physical—health. Talk to your doctor or a licensed mental health professional if you're concerned about your mental health.
- **Connect with the community.** Reaching out to community-based organizations can help connect you with programs that can provide food resources, rent assistance, financial guidance and other resources to those who qualify.
- **Avoid negative media.** Consuming too much negative content can increase feelings of anxiety. Set a limit for how much news-related information you consume each day, and focus instead on other activities, such as going for a walk or reading a book.

To deal with the current economic uncertainty, it's best to focus on what you can control. That can mean fitting higher costs of necessary goods into a budget, prioritizing a positive mindset and focusing on your mental health.



The Weather's Impact on Your Energy

Are you energized and happy on a warm, sunny day? Does hot weather make you grumpy? Do you feel bummed on a rainy or gloomy day? Temperature, humidity and atmospheric pressure can disrupt your circadian rhythm and impact your mental health, including your level of energy.

Typically, cold weather signals your body to settle down, resulting in less energy during winter. Depending on where you live, warmer temperatures can boost your energy along with your mood, but only up to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. After that, you may feel the urge to escape the heat.

Sunlight can also impact your energy level. Light tells your circadian clock to stay awake, and darkness signals that it's time to rest. As a result, you may feel groggier as the days get shorter in the winter months. If you're struggling to get through the winter season or your daily functions are affected by your mood or energy level, reach out to your doctor for help.



Recipes

Try out these two healthy recipes from the
USDA's MyPlate Kitchen website.



Hearty Vegetable Beef Soup

Makes 4 servings



Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of a 14.5-ounce can low-sodium chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- 2 cups mixed vegetables (frozen)
- 1, 14.5-ounce can tomatoes
- 4 ounces beef (cooked, diced)
- 1 tsp. thyme leaves (crushed)
- 1 dash black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. teaspoon salt
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups noodles (narrow-width, uncooked)

Directions

1. Heat broth and water. Add vegetables, meat and seasonings. Bring to boil, reduce heat and boil gently, uncovered, for 15 minutes
2. Add noodles. Cook until noodles are tender, about 10 minutes.
3. Remove bay leaf before serving.

Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	173
Total fat	3 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Cholesterol	28 mg
Sodium	331 mg
Total carbohydrate	25 g
Dietary fiber	6 g
Total sugars	6 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	12 g
Vitamin D	0 mcg
Calcium	73 mg
Iron	3 mg
Potassium	478 mg



Curried Brown Rice With Pumpkin Seeds, Apricots and Spinach

Makes 4 servings



Ingredients

- 1 cup brown rice (short grain, uncooked)
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves (chopped)
- 1 medium red onion (peeled and finely chopped)
- 1 Tbsp. curry powder
- 2 cups fresh spinach (chopped)
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup dried apricots (chopped)
- ½ cup pumpkin seeds (toasted)

Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	463
Total fat	19 g
Saturated fat	3 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Sodium	150 mg
Total carbohydrate	64 g
Dietary fiber	8 g
Total sugars	20 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	15 g
Vitamin D	N/A
Calcium	93 mg
Iron	5 mg
Potassium	N/A

Directions

1. Rinse the rice well.
2. Heat the oil over medium heat in a large, heavy saucepan.
3. Add the onions and garlic and cook for three to four minutes, then stir in the curry powder.
4. Add the rice and broth and bring to a boil over high heat.
5. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 30-45 minutes until the liquid is absorbed.
6. Remove from heat and stir in the apricots and spinach.
7. Replace the cover and let it sit for 10 minutes.
8. Add the pumpkin seeds, salt and black pepper and fluff with a fork.
9. Serve immediately.