APWU HEALTH PLAN

Summer 2022

HealthConnection

6 Reasons To Get A Flu Shot

Influenza is a respiratory infection that can cause serious complications. Young children, pregnant people, and older adults are particularly vulnerable.

There are many good reasons to get a flu shot each year. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against the flu and its potentially serious complications.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone age six months or older.

1. A flu shot can prevent you from getting sick with the flu. According to the CDC, during a recent flu season, vaccination prevented an estimated 7.5 million influenza illnesses.
2. A flu shot can reduce the severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick. Among adults hospitalized with flu, vaccinated patients were 59 percent less likely to be admitted to the ICU than those who had not been vaccinated.
3. A flu shot can reduce the risk of flu-related hospitalization. Vaccination prevents tens of thousands of hospitalizations each year. For example, during a recent flu season, vaccination prevented an estimated 105,000 flu-related hospitalizations.
4. A flu shot can help protect people with chronic health conditions. Among people with asthma, COPD, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, and HIV/AIDS, vaccination reduces the risk of flu-related complications.
5. A flu shot can help protect people during and after pregnancy. Vaccination reduces the risk of flu-related respiratory infections in pregnant people by about 50 percent.
6. A flu shot can save the lives of children. Vaccination can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from flu.

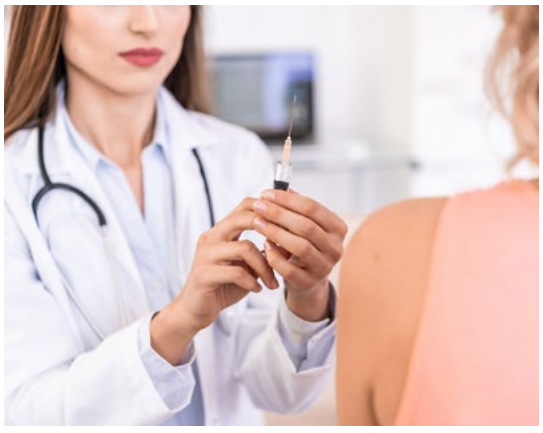
When to get your flu shot

Companies that make the flu vaccine release a new version every year to keep up with rapidly adapting viruses. For people in the United States, it's usually best to get a flu shot in September or October, but it's never too late to get the vaccine.

After you get vaccinated, it takes up to two weeks for your immune system to produce antibodies to protect you from the viruses included in the vaccine.

How well the flu vaccine works can vary from year to year. Even when the vaccine doesn't completely prevent the flu, it often lessens the severity of your illness and can keep you out of the hospital.

What are the benefits of flu vaccination?
https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccine-benefits.htm



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Protect Your Child From Measles With The MMR Vaccine

In 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that measles had been eliminated from the United States. However, travelers continue to bring measles into the country, and it sometimes spreads and causes outbreaks among those who are not vaccinated. The most important thing you can do to protect yourself and your family is to make sure your children get vaccinated on time according to the immunization schedule developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can cause severe, sometimes permanent, complications, including pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death. It's so contagious that nine out of 10 people who are not vaccinated will become infected after being exposed to the measles virus.

The virus that causes measles lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person and spreads easily through breathing, coughing, and sneezing. When someone with measles coughs, sneezes, or talks, infected droplets spray into the air and land on surfaces, where they remain active and contagious for several hours.

If an unvaccinated child breathes in the contaminated air or touches the infected surface, and then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected.

There is no antiviral drug available to treat measles.

Symptoms of measles

After a child is exposed to measles, a rash usually appears within 14 days. Other symptoms include:

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Eye irritation
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea
- Sensitivity to light

How to prevent measles

The measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine is a safe and effective way to protect your child from measles. The CDC recommends two doses of the MMR vaccine for children. Infants should get their first measles vaccine between 12 and 15 months, followed by another shot between four and six years.

Unvaccinated adolescents should get two doses, with at least 28 days between doses. Anyone who only received one dose should get the second dose.

Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional to find out if your child or teen should receive a vaccination.

Members of the APWU High Option Plan are covered at 100% (when you stay in-network) for immunizations recommended by the CDC for both adults and children.

Measles Elimination
https://www.cdc.gov/measles/elimination.html

See Your Doctor Within 30 Days Of Being Discharged From The ER

APWU Health Plan High Option covers mental health and substance abuse care. For services received in a network emergency department, members pay 15 percent of the cost of the care. Please refer to your plan documents for more details about your specific coverage.

Leaving the emergency department after receiving mental health or substance abuse treatment can be a vulnerable time. To help protect the health and safety of APWU Health Plan members, anyone who receives treatment in the emergency department or hospital for mental health or substance abuse must have a follow-up appointment with a primary care doctor within 30 days.

Need help finding a doctor?

APWU Health Plan is here to help.

1-800-222-2798
1-800-622-2511 (TTY)
8:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. ET
Monday – Friday
apwuhp.com

5 Healthy Pregnancy Breakfast Ideas

Breakfast may be the most important meal of the day, especially when you're pregnant, as it provides essential nutrients for you and your baby, including folate, B vitamins, calcium, and vitamin C. A healthy breakfast contains a combination of carbohydrates, protein, and fat.

Carbohydrates are a valuable source of fiber and provide energy for the day. People who experience diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) may need to limit their carbohydrate intake.

Protein is important for your baby's growth, and including a source of protein in your breakfast can help you feel full for longer.

Fat is essential because during pregnancy your body needs more fat. Try to eat monounsaturated fats (like avocado, nuts, and olive oil) rather than saturated varieties.

If you have morning sickness, skipping breakfast can make it worse. Your stomach needs to have food in it, even when you don't feel like eating.

Try these five easy pregnancy breakfast ideas:

Oatmeal with fruit

Sprinkle blueberries, banana slices, strawberries, or peaches onto oatmeal.

Green smoothie

Whip up a quick smoothie with frozen fruits, full-fat coconut milk, Greek yogurt, and spinach.

Scrambled eggs and quinoa

Eggs are safe to eat during pregnancy, as long as they're pasteurized and cooked. Quinoa is high in protein, fiber, and amino acids and can help keep you full.

Avocado toast and a glass of milk

Spread mashed avocado, olive oil, red pepper flakes, and sea salt onto wholegrain toast.

Yogurt and toppings

Top yogurt with fresh fruit, granola, or chia seeds.

When you're pregnant, avoid unpasteurized raw milk and soft cheeses, smoked seafood, and raw or soft-boiled eggs. Also, go light on the caffeine and sugary foods.

Enroll in the Healthy Pregnancies, Healthy Babies® Program and take the first step toward giving your baby a healthy start in life. Enroll by calling CareAllies at 1-800-582-1314.

Eating Right Before and During Pregnancy
https://www.ucsfhealth.org/education/eating-right-before-and-during-pregnancy







How To Take Care Of Your Feet When You Have Diabetes

People with diabetes often have persistent high blood sugar that damages the nerves and blood vessels in the feet. The condition, diabetic neuropathy, can cause you to lose feeling in your feet and reduce your ability to feel pain, heat, or cold.

Pain is the body's way of telling you something is wrong. If you can't feel pain in your feet, you may not notice a cut, blister, or sore. Even a small cut can have serious consequences that could result in losing a toe, foot, or leg.

That's why it's important to check your feet every day. Catching problems early and getting treatment right away can greatly reduce your risk of complications.

Manage your blood sugar

As diabetes progresses, it can also reduce blood flow to your feet, making it harder for injuries to heal or for you to resist infection. Keeping your blood sugar in your target range as much as possible can help prevent nerve damage and stop it from getting worse.

Eat a healthy diet, rich in fruits and vegetables, get the physical activity you need, and take all medications your doctor prescribes. If you smoke, ask your doctor to help you quit.

Tips for healthy feet

Inspect your feet every day. Check for any problems or changes to your skin or nails, including cuts, sores, blisters, redness, or swelling. If you can't see the bottom of your feet, use a mirror or ask a family member to help.

Gently wash your feet in lukewarm water. Never use hot water and don't soak your feet because that can dry out your skin. Dry your feet completely.

Moisturize your feet. Use a daily moisturizer, but avoid applying it between your toes because that could cause an infection.

Trim your toenails carefully. Cut them straight across and smooth any sharp edges with a file. Avoid cutting your nails too short, which could lead to ingrown toenails. If you can't see or reach your feet, ask your foot doctor for help.

Never treat corns or calluses at home. Removing thick skin on your feet the wrong way could damage your skin. Never use medicated pads or liquid removers. Visit your foot doctor for appropriate treatment.

Never walk barefoot. Always wear shoes or slippers, even at home. You could step on something and get a scratch or cut.

Inspect your shoes before putting them on. Your feet may not be able to feel a pebble or other object, so always shake out your shoes and feel the inside before lacing them up.

Get your feet checked at every healthcare visit. Visit your foot doctor every year (or more often if you have nerve damage) for a complete exam.

Regular foot care at home and keeping your doctor's appointments can help prevent foot problems and stop small issues from becoming more serious.

Diabetes and Your Feet
https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/healthy-feet.html



Statins May Cause Tiredness And Fatigue

Statins are among the most widely used prescription drugs on the market. Tens of millions of Americans take statins to lower their cholesterol and reduce the buildup of cholesterol (called plaque) inside their arteries. Plaque that partially or fully clogs the arteries can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

A study from the University of California San Diego found that people taking statins experienced higher levels of fatigue and tiredness, especially after exertion, than people who took a placebo.

These side effects increased as the dosage of the statin increased:

- 4 in 10 women experienced fatigue and loss of energy after activity.
- People between the ages of 70 and 75 who had been diagnosed with heart disease were more likely to experience fatigue and loss of energy.

Talk with your doctor

All drugs have side effects that doctors take into account when prescribing medication. If your doctor recommends that you take a statin to control your cholesterol or to

reduce your risk of heart attack, discuss the potential side effects. Information on side effects helps doctors and patients to make better informed decisions.

For patients with a high risk of cardiovascular problems, the potential benefits of taking statins may outweigh the risk of side effects such as increased levels of fatigue. Doctors and patients should work together to discuss the balance of benefits and risks of taking a statin. People should not stop taking prescribed statins based on this news.

Statins pills 'may cause fatigue'
https://www.nicswell.co.uk/health-news/statins-pills-may-cause-fatigue



Difficulty Breathing Is A Sign Of Asthma In Adults

Asthma is a condition in which the inner lining of your airways becomes inflamed and produces excess mucus. The muscle around the airways tightens, which makes it difficult to breathe.

Many people develop asthma during childhood, but asthma symptoms can occur at any time in life. Adult-onset asthma refers to anyone who experiences symptoms of asthma for the first time as an adult.

Adult-onset asthma vs. childhood asthma

Children with asthma often experience symptoms that are triggered by an allergy or a respiratory infection. Asthma symptoms sometimes disappear during the teenage years only to return in adulthood. Adult-onset asthma tends to have persistent symptoms that are not associated with a specific trigger and may require medication to keep asthma under control.

The symptoms of asthma in adults include:

- Difficulty breathing
- A dry cough
- Wheezing as you exhale
- Tightness or pressure in the chest
- Shortness of breath after exercise or physical exertion
- Chest colds that last for ten days or more

What causes adults to develop asthma?

Adults develop asthma for a number of reasons:

- Being overweight or obese
- Hormonal changes during pregnancy or menopause
- Viruses and infections
- Exposure to allergens or irritants at home or at work

Managing adult-onset asthma

Work with your doctor to develop an asthma action plan that walks you through what to do if your symptoms worsen, and take steps to manage your asthma.

Check your lungs every day at home. Use a peak flow meter to monitor your lungs and detect changes before you experience any symptoms.

Take prescription drugs as prescribed. Always ask your doctor before you make any changes to your medications, and only use over-the-counter medications your doctor recommends.

Use your rescue inhaler. If you have trouble using an inhaler, ask your doctor about your options.

Control known or potential allergy triggers. Allergy-proof your house for dust, mold, cockroaches, and other common allergens. And reduce your exposure to possible allergens at work.

Have an annual checkup. Be sure to see your doctor at least once a year, even if your asthma symptoms are under control, and get a seasonal flu shot and a pneumococcal vaccine.

Exercise regularly. Maintaining a healthy weight can help you stay healthy and control your asthma. Check with your doctor if you haven't been physically active recently.

Stop smoking. Tobacco smoke and vaping can harm your lungs and make your asthma harder to control. Talk to your doctor about creating a plan to help you quit smoking.

Don't ignore your symptoms. If you suspect you might have adult-onset asthma, see your doctor. Undiagnosed asthma can cause permanent damage to your lungs.

Why Asthma Can Hit You Harder as an Adult
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-does-asthma-hit-you-harder-as-an-adult/

Lower Your Blood Pressure With The DASH Diet

DASH is a well-balanced diet that promotes portion control and encourages you to eat foods that are naturally low in salt, cholesterol, saturated fat, and added sugars. DASH, which stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, can help you lower your blood pressure and bad cholesterol, reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke, and lose weight.

The typical American diet include 3,400 milligrams of sodium (or salt) or more a day. The goal of the DASH diet is to lower the amount of sodium you consume to 2,300 milligrams per day, about the amount of sodium in a teaspoon of table salt.

It's easy to follow the DASH diet with foods you can find at your local grocery store.

Recommended servings per day

The number of servings you should eat depends on your daily calorie intake. For a diet that includes 2,000 calories per day, you should try to eat:

Grains: 6 – 8 servings a day. A serving is 1 slice of bread, 1 ounce of dry cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta. Three of your daily servings should be whole grains.

Vegetables: 4 – 5 servings a day. A serving is 1 cup of raw leafy green vegetables, 1/2 cup of cut raw or cooked vegetables, or 1/2 cup of vegetable juice.

Fruits: 4 – 5 servings a day. A serving is 1 medium-sized piece of fruit, 1/2 cup of frozen or canned fruit, 1/2 cup of fruit juice, or 1/4 cup of dried fruit.

Fat-free or low-fat dairy products: 2 – 3 servings a day. A serving is 1 cup of milk or yogurt, or 1.5 ounces of cheese.

Lean meats, poultry, and fish: 1 – 2 servings a day. A serving is 3 ounces of cooked meat, poultry, or fish, or 1 egg.

Beans, nuts, and seeds: 4 – 5 servings a week. A serving is 1/2 cup of cooked legumes (beans or peas), 1/3 cup of nuts, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, or 1 tablespoon of seeds.

Healthy fats and oils: 2 – 3 servings a day. A serving is 1 teaspoon of margarine, 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise, or 2 tablespoons of salad dressing.

Sweets and added sugars: fewer than 5 servings a week. A serving is 1 tablespoon of sugar, jelly, or jam, 1/2 cup of sorbet, or 1 cup of lemonade.

Don't be discouraged if you find it difficult to follow the DASH diet at first. Start with small, achievable goals. For example, add berries or sliced fruit to your cereal at breakfast.

As you cut back on sodium, food may taste different. It may take time for your palate to adjust, but once it does, you may find you prefer to follow the DASH eating plan.

DASH diet: Healthy eating to lower your blood pressure
https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/dash-diet/art-20048456



7 Warning Signs Of Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon or rectum, two parts of the large intestine. It usually begins as small clumps of cells called polyps.

In the early stages of the disease, many people with colorectal cancer experience no warning signs. Symptoms may not appear until the cancer has grown or spread.

Having any of these symptoms doesn't mean you have colorectal cancer, but your doctor can determine if you need to be screened for colorectal cancer.

Warning signs of colorectal cancer include:

1. Weakness and fatigue
2. Cramping or stomach pain that doesn't go away
3. A change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea or constipation, that lasts for more than a few days
4. A change in the consistency of your stool

5. A feeling that your bowel doesn't empty completely
6. Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
7. Losing weight without trying

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor right away. Something other than cancer may be the cause. The only way to know what is causing your symptoms is to see your doctor.

Screening for colorectal cancer

Doctors recommend that people with an average risk of colorectal cancer start screenings at age 50. During a screening, doctors can prevent some colorectal cancers by finding and removing polyps before they turn into cancer. Colorectal cancer that's found early through screening is often easier to treat.

Colorectal cancer can happen at any age, but most people with this type of cancer are older than 50. Someone could have colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer without knowing it. That's why it's so important to get screened regularly for colorectal cancer.

If you have a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, you may need to be screened sooner. Inflammatory intestinal conditions, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, can also increase your risk of colorectal cancer.

What are the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer?
https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/signs-and-symptoms-of-colon-cancer.html



Should You See A Chiropractor For Back Pain?

Seeing a chiropractor offers many benefits that can improve your physical health and emotional well-being. While many people see a chiropractor only when they can no longer tolerate their back pain, a chiropractor can help prevent something from going wrong in the first place.

Chiropractors are trained to diagnose the specific cause of back pain and use spinal manipulation, physical therapy, patient education, and rehabilitation exercises to relieve pain in your back, joints, and muscles.

Much of the time, chiropractic care can successfully treat back pain without the need for prescription pain killers or surgery. Medication-free treatment is important because some doctors may prescribe potentially addictive opioids for back pain.

Signs you should seek chiropractic care

A number of factors can contribute to chronic back pain, including posture, how long you're on your feet each day, and the type of work you do.

If your job requires you to sit for long periods of time, you may end up with poor posture that puts unwanted pressure on your back, neck, and shoulders. The pressure can cause a slipped or herniated disc in your back. A chiropractor can make sure your spine is aligned correctly.

If the soles of your shoes wear out unevenly, it may be a sign that your body is out of alignment. A chiropractor can use spinal manipulation to realign your spine and prevent chronic back pain.

A shooting pain in your legs, tingling, or weakness could be a sign of a pinched nerve or slipped disc. A chiropractor can diagnose the cause of the pain and perform a spinal adjustment to alleviate the unwanted pressure that is causing the pain.

Your first visit to a chiropractor

During your first appointment, the chiropractor will gather information about you by asking questions about how your pain began, how it affects you, the level of the pain, and any other symptoms you have.

The chiropractor will perform an exam to assess various aspects of your pain and look at alignment, muscle tone, nerve function, how your body moves, and how well you can bend and turn. After the exam, your chiropractor will offer a diagnosis of what is causing your back pain along with a recommend treatment plan. The goal of chiropractic care is to return you to the activities that are important in your life.

The APWU Health Plan's High Option offers chiropractic treatments with only a $25 copay when you stay in-network. See our Federal Brochure for more details!

Signs You Should See a Chiropractor
https://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/should-i-go-to-a-chiropractor

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We want to hear from you!

In an effort to improve our future products and services, we are asking for 5 minutes of your time to provide us feedback on your experiences with the APWU Health Plan.
To get started just scan the QR code or visit this link: ***https://hcsurvey.apwuhp.com***