ASK THE EXPERT
Preventing Colds and the Flu
by Alicia Robbins, BS, Health Coach

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against influenza and its potentially serious complications. People at high risk of flu complications include children under age 2, pregnant women, people 65 years and older, and people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease.

Other ways to prevent colds and the flu this season

- If you begin to feel sick while at work or school, go home as soon as possible.
- Eat a well balance diet to ensure your vitamins through food. To boost your immunity and a healthier gastrointestinal track add more Omega 3, Vitamin D, and probiotics.
- Get plenty of rest/sleep for your body to recover.
- Stay physically active to activate your immune response.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth: germs spread this way.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands thoroughly.
- Routinely clean frequently touched objects and surfaces, including doorknobs, keyboards, and phones to help remove germs.
- Take an antiviral drug if your doctor prescribes them. Studies show that flu antiviral drugs work best for treatment when they are started within 48 hours of getting sick, but starting them later can still be helpful! Follow your doctor’s instructions for taking this drug.

FITNESS

How to Increase Your NEAT

by Cara Harris, BS, Wellness Program Coordinator

Last month’s discussion was the meaning and importance of NEAT. This month we will discuss how to increase your NEAT. As a reminder, NEAT stands for non-exercise activity thermogenesis, and it is defined as the energy expended for everything you do that is not sleeping, eating, or formal exercise. This means completing everyday activities burns calories and can be a factor in weight loss over time.

It is important to develop strategies that encourage movement, whether at work or at home. With a sedentary job, get creative to stay active throughout the day. Set reminders to get up and move. Use an activity tracker to track steps. Aim for a minimum of 3,000-5,000 steps per day. Work your way up to 10,000 steps per day over time. Listed below are ideas for increasing your NEAT.

Examples for increasing your NEAT at work:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Implement walking meetings at work.
- Park your car further from the door at work (or while running errands).
- Take a quick break every hour to stand up and stretch. If time allows, do walking lunges across the room.
- Walk to a restroom or water fountain that’s farther away.

It is also important to encourage movement at home. Get the whole family involved to stay active!

Examples for how to increase your NEAT at home:

- Complete household tasks such as cleaning, vacuuming, laundry, raking the leaves, putting up holiday decorations etc.
- When talking on the phone, stand up and walk around your house.
- Become an “active” relaxer. Stay mindful about how you relax. Instead of watching television, go for a walk, do yoga, or find a fun hobby.
- Take a stroll with your dog or the family around the neighborhood.

Now get moving!
CINNAMON CHICKPEA BLONDIES

INGREDIENTS:
1 can (15oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
½ cup cashew butter
¼ cup oats
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup pure maple syrup
1½ tsp ground cinnamon
1½ tsp vanilla extract
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt
¼ cup chopped walnuts
1 tbsp cinnamon and sugar mix

DIRECTIONS:
1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Spray an 8x8 baking dish with non-stick cooking spray or line with parchment paper.
3. Combine all ingredients (except walnuts) in the bowl of a food processor and puree until smooth.
4. Spread batter into prepared baking dish and sprinkle walnuts on top, pressing in slightly. Lightly sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar, if desired.
5. Bake for 30 minutes until sides start to pull away from baking dish and the top is firm. The blondies will continue to firm up while cooling. Allow to cool and cut into sixteen squares and enjoy!

Nutritional Information — Serves 16
Serving Size: 1/16 of a pan
Calories: 140 Carbohydrate: 19g
Protein: 4g Fat: 6g
Sodium: 182mg Fiber: 3g

Healthy Holiday Eating Tips
by Vanessa Mitchell, RDN

The holidays: A time of joy. A time of thanks and giving. A time of feasting. These times of gathering together and eating delicious food do, however, present ample opportunity to overeat or throw you off track.

To enjoy holiday meals in a more balanced way this season, consider the following:

- Write your health-related goals on a note card prior to the gathering. Perhaps verbalize your goals to someone else.
- Arrive at an appropriate hunger level—you are beginning to feel hungry, neither starving nor full.
- Survey all food options and determine your plan before picking up a plate. Strive for balance, choose what you truly want and leave the rest.
- Serve yourself on a smaller, mid-size plate instead of the largest plate.
- Save your calories for food and choose to drink water.
- Serve yourself 25 percent smaller portions than you usually do.
- Sit far away from the serving bowls and platters.
- Take a few deep, cleansing breaths and center yourself before eating.
- Eat non-starchy vegetables and lean protein first.
- Eat slowly (20-30 minutes) and enjoy the wonderful food.
- If something isn’t delicious and satisfying, don’t finish eating it.
- Challenge yourself to stop eating when you feel slightly full/pleasantly full—even if there is still food on your plate.
- Practice mindful, intuitive eating every day and you will be well-prepared for holiday eating.

And, remember, sleep and physical activity impact what and how much you eat. Continue to prioritize your weekly exercise plan, and achieve 7-9 hours of sleep most nights. Happy Holidays!
Can you create your own happiness? Yes, but why is it important?

Research shows many health benefits including:

- Boosts immune system
- Decreases stress
- May protect the heart by reducing blood pressure and decreasing risk of heart disease
- May reduce pain from certain conditions like arthritis

Research supports certain day to day habits can boost your happiness throughout life. Here are 5 daily habits to start increasing your happiness today!

**Exercise Daily** Exercise has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, depression while improving self-confidence, mood and boosting happiness. Lead happiness researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky states “Exercise may well be the most effective instant happiness booster of all activities.”

**Meditate** Practicing meditation allows you to slow down and focus on the task at hand which can reduce stress. Meditation can also improve sleep which shows to increase positive thoughts.

**Practice Gratitude** Psychologist and researcher Shawn Anchor suggests a daily habit of recalling three things you are grateful for in each day. His research suggests this will improve the ability to see the positive in the world which helps lead to happiness.

**Adopt a Healthy Diet** Science shows a link between nutrition and mental health. Try adopting a simple, non-restrictive diet and avoid processed foods.

**Take Time Away From Technology** Studies show constant focus on screens can disrupt sleep and interrupt mindfulness on what truly makes us happy. Happiness researcher Shawn Anchor states, “Studies have shown the less negative TV we watch, specifically violent media, the happier we are.”

The take away message for all of us is our happiness is determined by our behaviors, our thoughts and our actions. For more ways you can create a happy and healthy life visit: https://www.developgoodhabits.com/make-you-happy/ or https://alifeofproductivity.com/5-habits-lead-happiness/