

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

Stay ahead of the flu: tips for a healthy fall

As flu season approaches, it's time to take action to protect yourself and your loved ones. The flu, also known as influenza, is a contagious illness that can cause symptoms like fever, cough, sore throat, and body aches. Here's what you need to know to stay safe and healthy.

Everyday preventive actions

While getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent the flu, there are other steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting infected.¹

- **Wash your hands:** Keep your hands clean by washing them often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- **Keep your distance:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- **Stay active:** Regular exercise can help keep you healthy.
- **Get enough sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night to help your body fight off germs.
- **Don't touch your face:** Germs spread when you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Cover your nose and mouth:** Do this when you sneeze to prevent those around you from getting sick.



- **Clean frequently touched surfaces:** Viruses live on doorknobs, handrails, cell phones, and countertops. Clean with a disinfectant.
- **Stay home when you're sick:** If you're feeling unwell, stay home to avoid spreading germs to others.
- **Protect vulnerable people:** The flu vaccine can help protect people who are more likely to get very sick from the flu, like older adults and young children.
- **Reduce severity:** If you do get the flu, the vaccine can make your symptoms less severe.
- **Lower risk of hospitalization:** Adult flu vaccination reduces the risk of ICU flu admissions.³

Your best defense: the flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is the most effective way to prevent the flu and its complications. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine every year.² The flu vaccine can:

- **Prevent the flu:** Getting vaccinated can keep you from getting the flu in the first place.

Act now

By following these simple steps and getting vaccinated, you can reduce your risk of getting the flu and help prevent the spread of the virus. Good news – you can visit your local Florida Blue Center to get your flu shot. [Click here](#), type in “vaccinations” and your zip code to schedule your appointment.

Resources: ¹ [CDC](#); ² [CDC](#); ³ [CDC](#)

Healthy gut, happy life

Did you know that your body is home to trillions of tiny microorganisms? These tiny helpers, known as the microbiome, live in your digestive system and play a vital role in keeping you healthy and happy.

Research shows that the gut microbiome produces chemicals that can affect mood, cognitive function, and behavior. A healthy balance of microorganisms in your digestive system is important for your mental and physical health. Having an imbalance of the gut microbiome, known as dysbiosis, can lead to health problems like digestive issues, obesity, and mental health disorders. So, what

can you do to keep your gut microbiome in tip-top shape?

Foods for a healthy gut

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and high in fiber can promote a healthy balance of microorganisms in your gut. Here are some superfoods that can help:

- **Probiotic-rich foods:** Yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, and kombucha contain live cultures that can help keep your gut in balance.
- **Prebiotic-rich foods:** Garlic, asparagus, bananas, onions, and whole wheat bread are sources of prebiotics, which help feed the good bacteria in your gut.



By incorporating these gut-friendly foods, managing stress, and limiting highly processed foods, you can lower the risk of some diseases and improve your overall health. To learn more, [join us](#) for a webinar, Ask the Dietitian: Microbiome Gut Health, on October 8 at 1:00 p.m. ET.

Resource: myclevelandclinic.org; mayoclinic.org

Kale Chips (Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 1 large bunch kale, tough stems removed, leaves torn into pieces (about 16 cups)
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Directions:

Position racks in upper third and center of oven; preheat to 400°F.

If kale is wet, very thoroughly pat

dry with a clean kitchen towel, transfer to a large bowl. Drizzle the kale with oil and sprinkle with salt. Using your hands, massage the oil and salt onto the kale leaves to evenly coat. Fill 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with a layer of kale, making sure the leaves don't overlap. (If the kale won't all fit, make the chips in batches.)

Bake until most leaves are crisp, switching the pans back to front



and top to bottom halfway through, 8 to 12 minutes total. (If baking a batch on just 1 sheet, start checking after 8 minutes to prevent burning.)

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

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