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Staying Healthy and Preventing Disease With Vaccines

Staying current with vaccinations is important for everyone because it helps protect against serious and potentially life-threatening diseases. That's why National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM), observed each August, is a great opportunity to focus on getting vaccinated and protecting yourself and your family against serious diseases.

The benefits of vaccinations are numerous. Vaccines can help prevent many serious illnesses, such as influenza, pneumonia, COVID-19 and hepatitis B. They also reduce the risk of complications from these diseases, such as hospitalization and death.

Many employers cover vaccinations at 100% as part of their in-network preventive care benefits, so take advantage of it! It's a great way to protect yourself against illness and stay healthy throughout the year.

As your children head back to school this fall, it's particularly important for you to work with your child's doctor or nurse to make sure they get caught up on missed well-child visits and recommended vaccines.

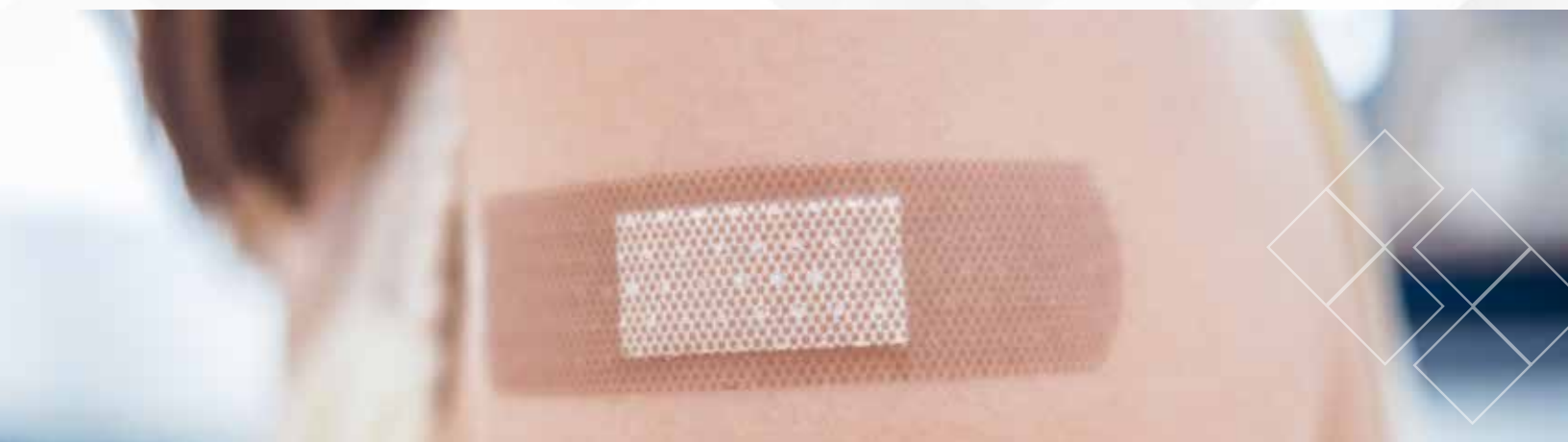
Take care of yourself too by scheduling any vaccines you need to stay healthy. Use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) adult vaccine assessment tool to see which vaccines might be right for you.

Talk to your healthcare provider about which vaccines you need, and make sure to stay up to date with your vaccinations to help protect your health and the health of those around you.



**National Immunization
Awareness Month**

For more information, visit the CDC at
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam>.





Take Your Workout Outdoors — Safely

For most of the country, August is second only to July as the hottest month of the year. If you want to stay cool and still enjoy the outdoors, it's tough to beat swimming as an activity, especially in a refreshingly chilly pool, lake or ocean. Beyond that, any exercise you can do slowly and mindfully is appropriate for hot days, including yoga, jogging at an easy pace, a leisurely bike ride or hiking in a shaded forest.

Here are other stay-cool tips:

- Wear light-weight, sweat-wicking clothes that allow for better airflow.
- Hydrate well in advance of your workout, and bring along water to drink during and after your workout.
- If you're running or biking, look for shaded routes, or do a high-intensive interval training (HIIT)* workout in a shaded area.
- Wear a hat, even if you'll be under tree cover.
- Have a plan to move indoors if the temperature and humidity begin to feel problematic.

Another important recommendation: Stay aware of how you're feeling, so you can detect any heat-related problems as soon as they start.

* For HIIT details, check out the American College of Sports Medicine overview:

<https://acsm.org/high-intensity-interval-training-fitness/>

Healthy and Delicious School Lunches

As parents, we all want our children to have healthy and balanced meals that will help them grow and thrive. But packing a lunch box that's both healthy and tasty can be a challenge, especially when kids have their own preferences and may be picky eaters. Fortunately, with a little creativity and planning, it's possible to make school lunches that are not only healthy but also delicious and satisfying.

Here are some tips for making tasty and healthy school lunches (and for your own lunch, too):

- 1. Include a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables:** Fruits and vegetables are packed with nutrients that are essential for growth and development. Try to include a variety of colors to ensure your child is getting a range of nutrients. You can cut them up and include them in a salad, as a side dish or in a sandwich.
- 2. Incorporate whole grains:** Whole grains provide long-lasting energy and important nutrients. Choose whole-grain bread, crackers, pasta or rice to include in your child's lunch.
- 3. Include a source of protein:** Protein is essential for growth and development, as well as providing energy. Good sources of protein include chicken, turkey, tofu, eggs, nuts and legumes.
- 4. Use healthy fats:** Healthy fats are important for brain development and overall health. Include sources of healthy fats like avocado, nuts, seeds and olive oil.
- 5. Keep it interesting:** To avoid boredom and ensure your child is excited to eat their lunch, try to mix it up by including different foods and flavors.
- 6. Consider portion sizes:** It's important to provide your child with the right amount of food to keep them satisfied throughout the day. Use portion control to ensure they are not getting too much or too little.

By following these tips, you can create yummy and healthy school lunches that will help your child feel energized and ready to learn.

For healthy ideas:

- Harvard Public Health Nutrition Source, Packing a Healthy Lunchbox: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-lunchbox-guide>
- USDA MyPlate resources: <https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/kids>

Real Food for Real Results: Avoid Ultra-Processed Options

It can be tempting to turn to ultra-processed foods as a quick and convenient solution for meals and snacks, especially if your kids are asking for them. Unfortunately, these types of foods are often high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats, and can have negative impacts on our health.

Ensuring that your kids eat healthy, whole foods can have a profound effect on their health, helping them to maintain a healthy weight, stabilize their moods, sharpen their minds and avoid a variety of health problems.

One approach that often helps is involving your kids in meal planning and preparation. Also let them choose healthy snacks and recipes that they enjoy.

See “On-the-Go 20 Unprocessed Finger Foods” at <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/on-the-go-20-unprocessed-finger-foods-for-kids-are-within-reach>.



Prioritizing Fun and Adventure Can Strengthen Your Relationship

Building a life together takes effort, and this includes playing. According to Dr. John Gottman,* a renowned psychologist and relationship researcher, sharing moments of joy and humor with your partner is one of the most effective ways to strengthen your relationship.

Try asking your partner open-ended questions to understand what adventure means to them, such as:

- How do you think we could have more fun together?
- What are you most excited about or looking forward to right now?
- What one-day adventure could you imagine us having together?

And don't forget about the little moments. Even the seemingly mundane bits of everyday life are opportunities for joy. Emptying the dishwasher together? Take your loved one's hand and dance around the kitchen. The possibilities for play are endless.

For more information on building strong relationships, go to **Gottman.com**.

* John Gottman co-founded the Gottman Institute, an organization dedicated to strengthening relationships and reducing marital instability. He is best known for his work on predicting marital stability and divorce through the use of scientific methods and has published numerous books and research papers on the topic.

Financial Tips to Finish the Year Strong

While the delights of summer may have been sweet, if you're looking at your bank account and wondering how to get it back in shape, here are a few financial tips to consider.

- **Review your budget.** Look at your spending habits over the past several months and see if there are any areas where you can cut back. This could include reducing eating out or entertainment expenses, canceling subscriptions you no longer use or finding cheaper alternatives to your current expenses.
- **Evaluate your debt.** Take a look at your current debt, including credit card balances, loans and mortgages. Consider whether you can make extra payments to reduce your debt more quickly or refinance your mortgage to a lower interest rate. Review your credit report and look for any errors that could be affecting your credit score. Or maybe there are alternatives to your transportation, like carpooling, public transit or riding your bike as the weather cools off. You'd be surprised how making small and temporary adjustments could go a long way.
- **Assess your retirement savings.** Late summer is a good time to review your retirement savings and make any necessary adjustments. Consider whether you're contributing enough to your 401(k) and look at your investment mix to make sure it's aligned with your retirement goals.
- **Set financial goals for the rest of the year.** Consider what you want to accomplish in the next few months, whether it's paying off debt, saving for a big purchase or increasing your emergency fund. Make a plan and track your progress.

By taking a few steps to assess your financial situation and make any necessary adjustments, you can help set yourself up for a strong finish for this year — and a great start for the new year.

Need to Relax? Take 5

Try breath counting for five minutes. This is a simple technique that's particularly good if you struggle with concentrating for long periods or if you find it hard to pay attention. It is great for enhancing focus. The gentle practice of paying attention to your breath also helps you to become more mindful throughout the day.

- Sit upright in your chair and set a timer for five minutes. Make sure your back is comfortably straight.
- Take a few deep breaths in and out through your nose (or through your mouth if your nose is blocked).
- Allow your breath to return to its normal rate and rhythm.
- On the first exhale, count "1" inside your head. On the second exhale, count "2." Keep counting on every exhale until you get to "5." Try to stay focused on your breathing the entire time.
- Once you reach "5," start counting again from "1" on the next exhale. Keep repeating this cycle, over and over again.
- If you feel your mind has wandered and you've stopped counting, don't worry. It's completely natural and a part of the process. Gently and lovingly acknowledge what has happened, then return to number 1.
- Your mind may wander, but that's fine. Just brings your thoughts back and go back to "1."
- Do this for five minutes.

Source: Dr. Rangan Chatterjee, author of *Healthy Mind, Healthy Life*.

