

WELL BALANCED^o

- DECEMBER 2023 -

Influenza Vaccination Week • National Handwashing Week



HEALTHY FOR THE *Holidays*

The holiday season is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, however it is notorious for being the most hectic, stressful, and tiring time of the year. While the end of the year is a time for reflection and celebration, the busy schedules and demands to create holiday magic can take a toll on our physical and mental health. That's why it's important to prioritize self care in all aspects of our lives.

When it comes to prioritizing our physical health, the winter months are an important time to prevent getting sick. There's nothing quite as miserable as adding sickness on top of the busy holiday season. One of the most common illnesses during this time of the year is Influenza, the well-known, contagious respiratory sickness.

In early December, we observe National Influenza Vaccination Week and Handwashing Awareness Week.

Flu Facts

- » The CDC estimates that from 2010 to 2020, flu has resulted in between 9 million and 41 million illnesses annually in the United States.⁽¹⁾
- » Most people recover from the flu but sometimes complications can be deadly.⁽²⁾
- » Early symptoms include fatigue, body aches and chills, cough, sore throat, and fever.⁽²⁾
- » The flu can be prevented with vaccination.⁽²⁾
- » Handwashing is another great way to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.⁽³⁾

Getting a flu vaccine can help protect you and those around you from getting sick. In addition to getting a flu vaccine, it's important to practice good hand hygiene.

Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coming in contact with people who may be sick, before eating or drinking, and after touching surfaces in a public space. You should also take care not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. If you don't have access to soap and water right away, alcohol-based hand sanitizer is good to use until you can get to soap and water.⁽³⁾

Not only is our physical health important during the holiday season, but so is our mental, emotional, and spiritual health. This season of the year can be particularly stressful due to the demands and feelings of obligation. Some great ways to stay grounded and centered during the holidays are to:

- » **Set boundaries and avoid overcommitment.** You simply cannot do it all. Choose to say "yes" to only the activities or obligations that best align with your values. Whether it be family time, travel, or rest, your values should guide your "yesses", not your feelings of FOMO or guilt.
- » **Set aside time for rest and relaxation.** Even a few minutes each day can be kept sacred for you to take a deep breath, step outside for fresh air, or close your eyes in meditation or prayer. If you catch yourself in a constant state of motion, take a minute to slow down and rest. If you're hosting a holiday gathering, consider enforcing "quiet time" or an end time to your parties to avoid feeling overstretched.

» **Prioritize moments for self-care.** Take time to do the activities that bring you back to your “center” and add a feeling of balance to your life. Some examples might be exercising, spending time in nature, soaking in a bath, working on a hands on project, reading a book, or playing music. Whatever activities bring you into a state of flow or balance can be self-caring.

» **Stay resilient.** Let go of the things that you can’t control and choose to be present for each moment. Life goes on without the perfectly decorated home, gourmet dinner spread, or ideal gift. Stay true to your values and be present for memory-making moments.

Don’t get carried away in the hustle and bustle of the busy end of year season. Take care to prevent illness, practice good hand hygiene, prioritize your values, and to slow down and reflect on the year behind you.



Want more resources on Influenza vaccines, handwashing, or self-care?

Talk to your employer to find out what is available to you through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or employee wellness program.



¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/faq.htm> ¹¹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/influenza/facts-and-statistics> ¹² <https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/personal-hygiene/hands.html>