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Live Well, Work Well

WAMPLER VARNER Insurance Group

What to Know About This Year's Flu Season

In the United States, influenza (flu) season lasts from October through May, with peak flu activity between December and March.

What's more, flu season in the Southern Hemisphere often indicates what's to come in the United States. Data revealed that the 2024 flu season in the Southern Hemisphere was similar to previous flu seasons. With the potential for this year's flu season to be severe in the United States, vaccination remains the most effective way to prevent the flu, especially severe disease and hospitalization.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the flu caused between **9 million** and **41 million illnesses** annually between 2010 and 2023.

How to Stay Healthy

The flu can cause serious complications for people of any age, but children and older adults are especially vulnerable. To help keep your household healthy this flu season, consider these tips:

- Get the flu vaccine. Being vaccinated against the flu is your best chance of preventing the illness. The CDC recommends that anyone aged 6 months and older get a flu shot every year.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and stay away from others when you feel unwell. Because flu, cold and COVID-19 symptoms are similar, doctors say it's best to get tested to know what you have.
- Wash your hands often using soap and warm water to protect against germs. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow, and dispose of tissues immediately.
- Get seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night to boost your immune system.
- Exercise regularly to strengthen your body and make it more resilient against infections, including the flu.
- Stay hydrated and eat a nutritious diet rich in whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, vegetables and fiber.

Experts recommend getting vaccinated against the flu by the end of October, so don't delay getting your shot. Contact your doctor today to learn more about vaccines.

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The Power of Breathwork

Breathwork, an ancient practice now embraced in modern wellness, benefits physical and mental health. By consciously altering your breathing patterns, you can:

- **Reduce stress.** You'll activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing chronic stress.
- **Enhance focus.** Slow, deep breathing can improve your concentration and emotional resilience.
- **Boost overall health.** Breathwork positively impacts physical health, emotional well-being and sleep quality.

Taking a few intentional breaths can make a difference, so try the techniques below.

Common Breathing Techniques

Equal breathing
Inhale and exhale for the same amount of time, such as breathing in for four seconds and out for four.

Box breathing
Mirroring the shape of a box, inhale for a count of four, hold for four, exhale for four and hold for four.

Deep breathing
For the 4–7–8 technique, breathe in for a count of four seconds, hold for seven and breathe out for eight.

Start Planning Now for a Stress-free Holiday Season

While the holiday season often brings joy, it can also cause stress for many individuals. Top holiday stressors include budgeting, managing multiple commitments and finding the perfect gifts. Fortunately, getting organized and planning what you can do ahead of time can help reduce your holiday stress. Consider these tips:

- **Write down any known commitments.** Are you hosting a holiday dinner? Does your child's school have a seasonal concert? Making a list of your commitments will help you plan your time accordingly and avoid double-booking yourself.
- **Create your budget now.** If you're stressed about how your holiday spending will impact you after the season ends, you're not alone. Set and stick to a realistic budget. Remember that a gift's sentiment is more important than the cost.
- **Start shopping early.** Sometimes, you can get great deals on presents before the holiday season hits. Also, you can avoid the scenario (and stress) of not being able to get the gift you want because it's sold out.

Pumpkin Chili

Makes: 8 servings

Ingredients

2 tsp. olive oil
1 small yellow onion (chopped)
1 green bell pepper (chopped)
2 jalapeño peppers (finely chopped)
2 cloves garlic (finely chopped or ½ tsp. garlic powder)
1 lb. ground turkey
1 can low-sodium diced tomatoes
1 can pumpkin puree
1 cup water
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 Tbsp. chili powder
Salt and black pepper (to taste)
1 can low-sodium kidney beans

Preparations

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat.
2. **Add the onion, bell pepper,** jalapenos and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until tender.
3. Add the turkey and cook until browned.
4. Add tomatoes, pumpkin, water, chili powder, cumin, salt and black pepper; bring to a boil.
5. Reduce the heat to medium-low, then add the beans.
6. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total calories	195
Total fat	9 g
Protein	14 g
Sodium	228 mg
Carbohydrate	18 g
Dietary fiber	6 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Total sugars	5 g

Source: MyPlate