



Healthy  MercyCareTM
LIVING

A wellness newsletter for MercyCare members

Winter 2021

Make 2021 Your Healthiest Year Yet!

Boost your health and well-being all year long with these easy tips!

1. Eat a Healthy Diet

Make healthy food choices like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and low-fat dairy products.

2. Move More, Sit Less

Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week, plus muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week.

3. Rethink Your Drink

Substitute water for sugary or alcoholic drinks to reduce calories and stay safe.

4. Get Enough Sleep

Adults need at least seven hours of sleep each night. Being active during the day can help you fall asleep at night.

5. Don't Use Tobacco

Smoking not only cuts lives short, but it greatly decreases quality of life. You can do it! Call 800-QUIT-NOW for free support.

6. Be Sun Savvy

Wear layered clothing and apply broad-

spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15 every two hours year round whenever you are outside.

Even in cold weather, the sun can damage your skin. UV rays, not the temperature, do the damage.

7. Take Care of Your Teeth

Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and don't forget to floss.

8. Wear Your Seat Belt

Reduce your risk of death by 45% and serious injury by 50%.

9. Practice Safety with the "3 Ws"

Wear your mask. Wash your hands. Watch your distance (stay six feet apart).

10. Get Regular Checkups

Visit your doctor regularly for preventive services and health screenings.

11. Learn Your Health History

Talk to your family about their health histories and share the information with your doctor. You can prevent chronic disease and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

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Healthy Living is published by MercyCare Health Plans to inform its members of current health issues and improve the use of MCHP services. This publication should not replace the care and advice of your doctor. Always talk to your health care professional about your personal health needs. MercyCare Health Plans is a Qualified Health Plan issuer in the Health Insurance Marketplace.





Make Cooking at Home Enjoyable

Since we're spending more time at home these days, you can focus on preparing healthier meals at home for yourself and your family without spending a lot of money. Try these tips to save time, money and stress the next time you decide to plan a meal.

Keep it simple. Healthy and creative meals don't have to be complicated. A simpler menu will usually cost less money and be easier to prepare.

Buy local and fresh. When you shop for local, fresh ingredients, you control what's going in your food. That can make a big difference in your overall health. And, a list of basic ingredients often costs less than eating out, and you can support your community farmers.

Allow your family to help. Divide jobs among family members. Remember, kids love to be in the kitchen! With help, meal prep can be more efficient and you'll have more time to enjoy with your family.

Stretch recipes by adding ingredients. Get more servings out of your favorite recipes. Add rice to soups or stews, frozen vegetables to favorite pasta dishes, or beans to burgers to serve up more meals.

Keep track of your calories. Making a meal yourself means you can control portion sizes and calorie counts. Recipes often come with nutritional information and serving size suggestions, which can help make eating healthy that much easier.

Make it personal. Cooking at home gives you the opportunity to personalize the foods you like exactly how you enjoy eating them.

Mix it up. Try having a holiday brunch this year. Breakfast foods like eggs are less expensive and make a great protein for the main dish.

You'll soon find that, like any activity, the more time you spend with family preparing food in your kitchen, the better you'll all become at creating fabulous, healthy meals!



Masks Can Help Slow the Spread of the COVID-19 Virus

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. Masks are a simple barrier to help prevent your respiratory droplets from reaching others. Studies show that masks reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. You should wear a mask, even if you don't feel sick, because people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms and those who aren't yet showing symptoms can still spread the virus to other people. The main function of wearing a mask is to protect those around you, in case you're infected but not showing symptoms. Below are the proper ways to use a mask:

WAYS TO WEAR A MASK

- Wear a mask to help protect others in case you're infected but don't have symptoms
- Keep the mask on your face the entire time you're in public
- Don't put the mask around your neck or up on your forehead
- Don't touch the mask, and, if you do, clean your hands

HOW TO PUT ON A MASK

- Wash your hands before putting on a mask
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- Make sure you can breathe easily
- Don't place a mask on a child younger than age two

HOW TO TAKE A MASK OFF

- Untie the strings behind your head or use the ear loops to remove your mask
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties
- Fold outside corners together
- Place reusable masks in the washing machine to clean and wear again
- Wash your hands with soap and water



How to Cope While Cooped Up

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its guidelines for COVID-19 quarantine (isolation) and lessened the amount of time people have to stay at home. The new acceptable guidelines include two options for when a quarantine can end*:

- After 10 days without a test if a person has reported no symptoms
- After 7 days with a negative test result if a person has reported no symptoms

*The CDC recommends that everyone should still monitor their own symptoms for 14 days after exposure.

If you or a loved one are required to quarantine at home due to exposure or diagnosis of COVID-19, there are things you can do while socially distancing to pass the time. Try these ideas to avoid feeling cooped up in your home this winter:

- **Meditate or try yoga.** Calm your nerves and bring some inner peace through self reflection.
- **Go for a walk outside.** Bundle up and head out to get some fresh air and a change of scenery.
- **Get creative.** Try painting, writing in a journal, or redecorating a room in your house.
- **Sit down with a good book.** A good plot can occupy your mind and transcend time.
- **Try a new hobby.** Learn how to play an instrument. Take a stab at knitting. Make cards and send them to loved ones.
- **Get organized.** Clean your closets. Now might be a good time to downsize your stuff. Plan to donate any clothing or items you no longer use once your quarantine is over.
- **Do a deep clean.** Sanitize. Wash your floors. Clear cobwebs.
- **Try a new recipe.** Focus on eating healthier, try a new food or use up leftovers.
- **Relax.** Take a bath, put on some music, take a nap. Use this time to focus on—and take good care of—yourself.



What to Expect When Visiting Mercyhealth

Mercyhealth recognizes the importance of family presence and engagement to promote holistic patient health and well-being. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, limitations to visitors in our hospitals and clinics have been put in place in order to minimize transmission to others.

As circumstances change, Mercyhealth will continue to modify its guidelines. Mercyhealth remains committed to supporting family presence and participation of those who are essential to a patient's care while continuing to minimize exposure to COVID-19 whenever possible.

Mercyhealth is offering in-person patient visits. At this time, you can schedule an appointment to meet with your doctor at the clinic, or if you prefer, you can still talk to your doctor through telemedicine.

Mercyhealth is offering elective procedures and proceeding with careful thought and preparation so that these services can be safely performed using appropriate protocols and precautions.

Your health and safety is a top priority.

Mercyhealth has implemented extra safety precautions including:

- Extra cleaning and disinfecting of waiting rooms, exam rooms and nurse stations
- Practicing social distancing
 - Spaced out chairs in waiting rooms
 - Flooring cues at most of our locations
- Requiring all partners, patients, visitors and vendors to wear a mask (You're welcome to bring your own face mask.)
- Monitoring temperatures of all patients and visitors when they enter a facility
- Restricting visitors in all facilities

For more information, or to prepare for your next visit to a Mercyhealth facility, visit mercyhealthsystem.org/alert/coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/.



Masking

All partners, patients, visitors and vendors are required to wear a mask.



Enhanced Cleaning

We have implemented extra cleaning and disinfecting



Screening

All patients and visitors have their temperature taken when they enter our locations.



Social Distancing

Our rearranged common areas and flooring cues allow safe distance.

Tips for Healthier Holiday Meals

Makeover your holiday meals by getting creative with healthier food choices. Try these tips to ensure your holiday celebration is a healthy one.

Enjoy all the food groups at your celebration

Offer healthier options during your holiday meal, such as whole-grain crackers with hummus as an appetizer; add unsalted nuts and black beans to a green leaf salad; include fresh fruit at the dessert table; use low-fat milk instead of heavy cream in casseroles.

Make sure your protein is lean

Choose turkey, roast beef, fresh ham, beans and fish such as cod or flounder. Trim fat when cooking meats. Go easy on the sauces and gravies since they can be high in saturated fat and sodium.

Toast to good health

Quench your thirst with low-calorie options. Drink water with lemon or lime slices. Try seltzer water with a splash of 100% fruit juice.

Bake healthier

Use recipes with unsweetened applesauce or mashed ripe bananas instead of butter. Try cutting the amount of sugar listed in recipes in half. Use spices to add flavor such as cinnamon, allspice or nutmeg instead of salt.

Tweak the sweets

For dessert, try baked apples with cinnamon and a sprinkle of sugar instead of apple pie. Make a parfait bar with colorful sliced fruit and low-fat yogurt.

Make exercise a part of the fun

Make being active part of your holiday tradition. Have fun walking and talking with family after your holiday meal. Give gifts that encourage others to practice healthy habits such as running shoes or reusable water bottles.

Enjoy your leftovers

Create delicious meals with your leftovers. Add turkey to soups or salads. Use extra veggies in omelets, sandwiches or stews. The possibilities are endless!





How to Keep Your Resolutions

Did you know that 92% of people who set out on a journey of self-improvement on January 1 fail by mid-year? New Year's resolutions don't just hinge on will power, they depend on how we prepare ourselves to accomplish the goals we set. These tips can better position ourselves to meet your 2021 goals:

- 1. Set SMART goals—specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.** For example, a common resolution is to go to the gym more. A SMART goal would be to go to a health club for 30 minutes at least twice a week for several months. SMART goals set you up to succeed by building confidence and creating momentum toward your goal.
- 2. Make a plan.** Create a plan and ensure you'll achieve it. Here are a few examples of planning strategies to get to a gym twice a week: Map out which days and times during the week

it is feasible to exercise. Ask yourself, "When can I reliably get away from family, school or work obligations to spend 30 minutes getting my heart rate up?" Commit by signing up for exercise classes at the beginning of the week.

- 3. Have a plan B.** Even the best planners hit road blocks. Allow for a backup plan (e.g., if there's a big snowstorm, use the time you spent shoveling to count as your gym time). If you're short on time, split up your 30 minutes into three, 10-minute walks.
- 4. Get support.** Recruit a friend, spouse, relative or colleague to join and attend the health club with you. If you made a resolution about healthy eating, ask your family if they're willing to forego the snacks and sweets with you. Having someone supporting you increases your chances of success.

Remember, making lifestyle changes is possible with a little hard work that includes a combination of internal motivation and breaking of old habits to form new ones. Enjoy a healthy 2021!



STAY SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON WITH THE “3 Ws”

W **EAR YOUR MASK.** Wear a mask with two or more layers over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin. Make sure the mask fits snugly against your face.

W **ASH YOUR HANDS.** Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you can't access soap and water, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

W **ATCH YOUR DISTANCE.** You could spread the virus without having any symptoms. Keeping six feet (two arm lengths) from others is important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Celebrating the Holidays Safely

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends against traveling to see friends or family over the holidays. Travel may increase your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Postponing travel and staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others this year. If you're still considering traveling during the holidays this season, below are important questions to help you decide what's best for you and your family and friends:

- Are you, someone in your household, or someone you'll be visiting at increased risk for getting very sick from COVID-19?
- Are cases high or increasing in your community or at your destination? Check the CDC's website for the COVID Data Tracker to discover the latest number of cases.
- Are hospitals in your community, or at your destination, overwhelmed with patients who have COVID-19? To find out, check state and local public health department websites.
- Does your home or destination have requirements or restrictions for travelers? Check state and local requirements before you travel.
- During the 14 days before your travel, have you or those you're visiting had close contact with people they don't live with?
- Do your plans include traveling by bus, train or air that may make staying six feet apart difficult?
- Are you traveling with people who don't live with you?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you should consider making other plans, such as hosting a virtual gathering or delaying your travel. It's important to talk to the people with whom you live, and your family and friends, about the risks of traveling for the holidays.

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

A pandemic can be stressful. Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming. Public health actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, such as social distancing, can make you feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. Use the information below to help you cope.

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.

Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can sometimes cause:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of loved ones, your financial situation or job, or loss of support services
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health and/or mental health problems
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol and other substances

Healthy ways to cope with stress include:

- Know what to do if you are sick. Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.
- Know where and how to get treatment and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy (either in person or through telehealth services).
- Take care of your emotional health to help you think clearly and react to any urgent needs to protect yourself and your family.
- Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including those on social media.
- Take care of your body; try to eat well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.
- Make time to unwind. Try to engage in activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Connect with a community- or faith-based organization either online, through social media, or by phone or mail.



It's Not Too Late to Vaccinate

Every year, influenza (flu) vaccination saves lives by preventing illnesses, medical visits and hospitalizations. Getting a flu shot is also an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions. For example, flu vaccination has been associated with lower rates of cardiac events among people with heart disease. And, if you're pregnant, getting a flu vaccine not only helps protect you from illness and hospitalization, but has also been shown to help protect your baby from flu infection for several months after birth, before the baby can be vaccinated.

Who should get their flu vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age and older, with rare exceptions, because it is an effective way to decrease flu illnesses, hospitalizations and death. This is especially true during the pandemic.

Can I still get a flu shot? It isn't too late to get vaccinated. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue throughout flu season, even into early next year.

The best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated every year.

Flu viruses constantly change, so flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against viruses that research suggests will be common during an upcoming flu season. Your protection from a flu vaccine declines over time. Yearly vaccination is needed for the best protection.

Call your physician to schedule a flu vaccine, or stop by any Mercyhealth pharmacy to get an adult vaccination. Visit mercyhealthsystem.org/service/pharmacy/ for pharmacy locations and hours.