

Disease Prevention Checklist

Health screenings, vaccines, and guarding yourself from germs and bugs can help keep you feeling your best. Here are tips to help you better prevent diseases:



GET SCREENED FOR DISEASES

Some screenings can reduce your risk of dying from a disease. But sometimes, experts say, a test may cause more harm than good. Before you get a test, talk with your doctor about the possible benefits and harms to help you decide what's best for your health.

To learn about screening tests, ask your doctor:

- What's my chance of dying of the condition with and without a screening?
- What are the harms of the test?
- How likely are false results?
- What are possible harms of the test?
- What's the chance of finding a disease that wouldn't have caused a problem?
- How effective are the treatment options?
- What are other ways to decrease my risk?



GUARD AGAINST GERMS

For nearly a century, bacteria-fighting drugs known as antibiotics have helped to control and destroy many of the harmful bacteria that can make us sick. But these drugs don't work at all against viruses, such as those that cause colds or flu. Learn how to protect yourself against germs in the environment.

To block harmful germs:

- Wash your hands often.
- If you're sick, make sure your doctor has a clear understanding of your symptoms.
- If antibiotics are needed, take the full course exactly as directed.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle—including proper diet, exercise, and good hygiene.



PROTECT YOUR BODY'S BACTERIA

Microscopic creatures—including bacteria, fungi, and viruses—can make you ill. But what you may not realize is that trillions of microbes are living in and on your body right now. Most don't harm you at all. We tend to focus on destroying bad microbes. But taking care of good ones may be even more important.

To protect good microbes:

- Don't pressure your doctor to give you antibiotics.
- Know when to wash your hands, like when handling food.
- Don't use antibacterial products you don't need. Antibacterial soaps and household products haven't been shown to reduce your risk of infection.
- Don't go overboard with hand sanitizers.
- Experiment with different skin moisturizers to see which work best for you.



PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

Most mosquito bites are relatively harmless. The itchy bumps often last for just a day or two after a mosquito has punctured your skin. But if the mosquito is carrying certain germs, like viruses or parasites, these pathogens might enter your blood during the bite and make you sick. But we can all take simple steps to avoid getting bit by those blood-sucking insects.

To avoid mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellents as directed on the label.
- Cover up. When outside, wear long sleeves, pants, and socks.
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors in your home to keep insects out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites. Empty standing water from flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, and birdbaths on a regular basis.



BLOCK TICK BITES AND LYME DISEASE

When warm weather arrives, you might get the urge to walk barefoot through the grass. But before you stroll through your lawn or head out on a hiking trail, you'll want to protect yourself and your loved ones from ticks that often lurk in tall grass, thick brush, and wooded areas. Many ticks carry disease, so do what you can to keep ticks from taking a bite out of you.

To prevent tick bites and tick-borne diseases:

- Help keep ticks off your skin by wearing long sleeves, long pants, and long socks.
- Ward off ticks by using an insect repellent.
- Walk in the center of trails and steer clear of tall vegetation.
- After being near ticks, bathe or shower as soon as possible, and wash or tumble your clothes in a dryer on high heat.
- Check your body carefully for ticks.
- Remove ticks right away.
- If you develop a rash or fever after removing a tick, see your doctor.



PROTECT YOURSELF AND EVERYONE ELSE FROM DISEASE

We share more than food and culture within our homes and communities. We can also spread disease. Luckily, we live in a time when vaccines can protect us from many of the most serious illnesses. Staying current on your shots helps you—and your neighbors—avoid getting and spreading disease.

To stay up-to-date, check on shots for:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bacterial meningitis | <input type="checkbox"/> Influenza (flu) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chickenpox | <input type="checkbox"/> Measles, Mumps, and Rubella |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diphtheria | <input type="checkbox"/> Pertussis (whooping cough) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Haemophilus influenzae type b | <input type="checkbox"/> Pneumococcal pneumonia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis A and B | <input type="checkbox"/> Rotavirus diarrhea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cervical & other cancers caused by HPV | <input type="checkbox"/> Shingles |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Tetanus |

Emotional Wellness Checklist

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Here are tips for improving your emotional health:



BRIGHTEN YOUR OUTLOOK

People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Another sign of emotional wellness is being able to hold onto positive emotions longer and appreciate the good times.

To develop a more positive mindset:

- Remember your good deeds.
- Forgive yourself.
- Spend more time with your friends.
- Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.
- Develop healthy physical habits.



REDUCE STRESS

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

To help manage your stress:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Build a social support network.
- Set priorities.
- Think positive.
- Try relaxation methods.
- Seek help.

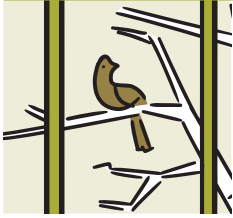


GET QUALITY SLEEP

To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.

To get better quality sleep:

- Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet place.
- Exercise daily.
- Limit the use of electronics.
- Relax before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol, nicotine, & stimulants late in the day.
- Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.



BE MINDFUL

The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what's happening in the present—of all that's going on inside and all that's happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.” Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.

To be more mindful:

- Take some deep breaths in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- Enjoy a stroll and notice the sights around you.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and when you're full.
- Find mindfulness resources in your local community, including classes, programs, or books.



COPE WITH LOSS

When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.

To help cope with loss:

- Take care of yourself.
- Talk to a caring friend.
- Try not to make any major changes right away.
- Join a grief support group.
- Consider professional support.
- Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble with everyday activities.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time.



STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being.

To build healthy support systems:

- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you're a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.

Environmental Wellness Checklist

What surrounds you each day in your home, work, or neighborhood can affect your health. Here are some tips to make your environments safer:



MAKE YOUR HOME HEALTHIER

Take a look around your home. Do you know what's in your household goods and products? Some chemicals can harm your health if too much gets into your body. Becoming aware of potentially harmful substances and clearing them out can help keep you and your family healthy.

To reduce toxic substances in your home:

- Clean with non-toxic products.
- Dust using a damp rag.
- Use a wet mop to clean floors.
- Vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- Open a window or use a fan to improve air circulation when you're cleaning.
- Have a good ventilation system.
- Wash your & your children's hands often.



REDUCE YOUR ALLERGIES

A change in season can brighten your days with vibrant new colors. But blooming flowers and falling leaves can usher in more than beautiful backdrops. Airborne substances that irritate your nose can blow in with the weather. When sneezing, itchy eyes, or a runny nose suddenly appears, allergies may be to blame. Take steps to reduce your exposure to allergens.

To reduce allergies:

- Avoid going outdoors when you're having allergies.
- If you go outside, wash your hair and clothing when you come inside.
- Keep humidity levels low in the home.
- Avoid upholstered furniture and carpets.
- Wash your bedding in hot water once a week.
- Vacuum the floors once a week.
- Talk with your doctor about medications and allergy shots.



STAY SAFE DURING HOT WEATHER

Heat is the biggest danger in the summer months. Being hot for too long can cause many illnesses, some of which can be deadly. But the warmer weather also brings lots of new opportunities to improve your health. Here's how to make the most of the summer months.

To create healthy summer habits:

- Beat the sun and heat with an early morning or evening activity.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Use sunscreen that blocks UVA and UVB.
- Use sunglasses that block UVA and UVB.
- Try to stay in the shade when outdoors.
- Go to an air-conditioned gym, do water workouts, or use a fitness video at home.
- Drink plenty of water.



GUARD AGAINST COLD WEATHER

The frosty air of winter can be invigorating. But cold air can also pose threats to your health, whether you're indoors or outside. Learn to recognize the signs of your body temperature dropping too low, and take steps to keep yourself and your family warm and safe during the chilly season.

To guard against the cold:

- Dress in layers.
- Cover up with blankets.
- Wear a jacket with a waterproof and windproof outer shell.
- To keep warm at home, wear socks, slippers, and a cap or hat.
- Set your heat at 68° or higher when it's cold outside. To save on heating bills, close off rooms you're not using.
- If you need help paying your heating bills, you may qualify for an energy assistance program.



AIR QUALITY AND YOUR HEALTH

The combination of high temperatures, few winds and breezes, pollution, and airborne particles can brew up an unhealthy mixture in the air, just waiting to enter your lungs. These substances can make it hard to breathe and can sap your energy. If the air quality is especially poor, it may take a few days for your body to recover. And if you're regularly exposed to high levels of unhealthy air, the health consequences can linger for months or even years.

To reduce the effects of poor quality air on your health:

- Avoid outdoor activities in the afternoons on warmer days, when the risk of air pollution is highest.
- Avoid strenuous outdoor activities if the air is polluted. Check your region's air quality index, which is often reported in the local news.
- Consider reducing the time and intensity of your outdoor workout or exercise indoors.



TEST FOR TOXIC GASES

Radon gas typically moves up through the ground and comes into homes through cracks in floors, walls, and foundations. Sometimes it enters the home through well water. Whatever the source, your home can trap radon inside, where it can build up. You might not be able to see or smell radon, but it can still harm you—slowly, and in ways that you can't detect.

To fight radon:

- Start by testing your home. You can do it yourself or hire a professional.
- If you find a radon problem in your home, take steps to fix it.
- If you smoke, stop. Smoking is an especially serious health risk when combined with radon.
- Get help for your radon questions at this national hotline: 1-800-55RADON (557-2366).



STAY SAFE IN THE WATER

Summer is a great time to go out and have fun in the water. But recreational waters—including swimming pools, lakes, and oceans—can sometimes get contaminated with bacteria and viruses. Swimming in contaminated water can make you and your family sick. But you can take steps to stay safer while playing in the water.

To stay safer while playing in the water:

- Shower before and after going into a swimming pool.
- Stay out of the water if you've had diarrhea in the last two weeks to help protect others from infectious germs.
- Try not to swallow recreational water.
- Avoid swimming or playing near places where storm water is released on the beach.
- Stay out of the water for at least 24 hours after a storm.
- Always wash your hands before you eat or drink.

Physical Wellness Checklist

Positive physical health habits can help decrease your stress, lower your risk of disease, and increase your energy. Here are tips for improving your physical health:



GET ACTIVE

How well your body functions affects your ability to accomplish your daily activities. Sedentary behavior—which usually means sitting or lying down while awake—has been linked to a shorter lifespan and a wide range of medical problems. Any time you get up and move, you’re improving your chances for good health.

To increase your activity:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Have “walking meetings” with colleagues.
- Walk on a treadmill while watching TV or using the computer.
- Set an alarm on your computer to go off every hour and prompt you to move around for a minute or two.
- Try walking as if you’re already late.
- Have small weights in your office or home.



MAINTAIN YOUR BODY

Your bones, muscles, and joints all work together to make your body an amazingly movable machine. Like any machine, your body can suffer some wear and tear. It needs regular care and maintenance to keep moving with ease.

To keep your body healthier:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Engage in muscle strengthening activities.
- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week.
- Wear comfortable, properly fitting shoes.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Try to avoid lifting heavy objects.



EAT A HEALTHY DIET

We make dozens of decisions every day. When it comes to deciding what to eat and feed our families, it can be a lot easier than you might think to make smart choices. A healthy eating plan not only limits unhealthy foods, but also includes a variety of healthy foods. Find out which foods to add to your diet and which to avoid.

To eat a healthier diet:

- Replace saturated fats, like butter or meat fat, with unsaturated fats, like vegetable oils.
- Cut back on sodium. Choose fresh foods and those that have no added salt or less than 5% of the Daily Value of sodium per serving.
- Choose more complex carbs, like whole-grain breads, cereals, starchy vegetables, and legumes.
- Cut added sugars. Pick food with little or no added sugar.
- Get more fiber. Switch to whole grains and eat more vegetables, beans, nuts, and seeds.



MIND YOUR METABOLISM

Your metabolism changes as you get older. You burn fewer calories and break down foods differently. You also lose lean muscle. Unless you exercise more and adjust your diet, the pounds can add up. Middle-age spread can quickly become middle-age sprawl. Carrying those extra pounds may be harming your health.

To combat age-related changes:

- Commit to a healthy diet.
- Limit snacking.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move more. Take the stairs and add walking breaks to your day.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Avoid tobacco products. When you quit smoking, you may improve many aspects of your health and are likely to add years to your life.



BUILD HEALTHY HABITS

We know that making healthy choices can help us feel better and live longer. Maybe you've already tried to eat better, get more exercise or sleep, quit smoking, or reduce stress. It's not easy. But research shows how you can boost your ability to create and sustain a healthy lifestyle.

To build healthy habits:

- Plan. Set realistic goals.
- Change your surroundings. Remove temptations.
- Ask for support.
- Fill your time with healthy activities.
- Track your progress.
- Imagine the future.
- Reward yourself.
- Be patient. Improvement takes time, and setbacks happen. Focus on progress, not perfection.



FIND A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Keeping your body at a healthy weight may help you lower your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer that can result from being overweight or obese. Take charge of your weight and your health.

To reach your weight loss goals:

- Eat smaller portions.
- Eat colorful vegetables each day.
- Choose whole grains.
- Go easy on sugar, fats, and oils.
- Stick with activities you enjoy.
- Go for a brisk walk, ride a bike, or do some gardening.
- Do strengthening activities.
- Get active for just 10 minutes, several times a day. Every little bit counts!
- Keep a food and physical activity diary.
- Be realistic and aim for slow, modest weight loss.

Social Wellness Checklist

Positive social habits can help you build support systems and stay healthier mentally and physically. Here are some tips for connecting with others:



MAKE CONNECTIONS

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health. Whether with family, friends, neighbors, romantic partners, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being. Look for ways to get involved with others.

To find new social connections:

- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby.
- Take a class to try something new.
- Try yoga, tai chi, or another new physical activity.
- Join a choral group, theater troupe, band, or orchestra.
- Help at a community garden or park.
- Volunteer at a school, library, or hospital.
- Participate in neighborhood events.
- Join a local community group.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS

Many of us will end up becoming a caregiver at some point in our lives. The stress and strain of caregiving can take a toll on your health. It's important to find ways to care for your health while caring for others. Depending on your circumstances, some self-care strategies may be more difficult to carry out than others. Choose ones that work for you.

To take care of yourself while caring for others:

- Ask for help. Make a list of ways others can help. For instance, someone might sit with the person while you do errands.
- Make to-do lists, and set a daily routine.
- Try to take breaks each day.
- Keep up with your hobbies and interests when you can.
- Join a caregiver's support group.
- Eat healthy foods, and exercise as often as you can.
- Build your caregiver skills. Some hospitals offer classes on how to care for someone with an injury or illness.



GET ACTIVE TOGETHER

Where you live, work, or go to school can have a big impact on how much you move and even how much you weigh. Being active with others in your community can have a positive effect on your health habits and create opportunities to connect. You can help your community create ways to encourage more physical activity.

To help make a more active community:

- Start a walking group with friends.
- Drive the speed limit and yield to people who walk.
- Consider joining an exercise group.
- Participate in local planning efforts to develop walking paths, sidewalks, and bike paths.
- Join other parents to ask for more physical activity at school.
- Try different activities!



SHAPE YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH HABITS

Many things can influence a child, including friends, teachers, and the things they see when they sit in front of the TV or computer. If you're a parent, know that your everyday behavior plays a big part in shaping your child's behavior, too. With your help, kids can learn to develop healthy eating and physical activity habits that last throughout their lives.

To help kids form healthy habits:

- Be a role model. Choose healthy food and activities when together.
- Make healthy choices easy. Have nutritious food and sports gear readily available.
- Focus on making healthy habits fun.
- Limit screen time.
- Check with caregivers or schools to be sure they offer healthy food and activities.
- Change a little at a time.



BOND WITH YOUR KIDS

Parents have an important job. Raising kids is both rewarding and challenging. Being sensitive, responsive, consistent, and available to your kids can help you build positive, healthy relationships with them. The strong emotional bonds that result help children learn how to manage their own feelings and behaviors and develop self-confidence. Children with strong connections to their caregivers are more likely to be able to cope with life's challenges.

To build strong relationships with your kids:

- Catch kids showing good behavior and offer specific praise.
- Give children meaningful jobs at home and positive recognition afterward.
- Use kind words, tones, and gestures.
- Spend some time every day in warm, positive, loving interaction with your kids.
- Brainstorm solutions to problems together.
- Set rules for yourself for mobile devices and other distractions.
- Ask about your child's concerns, worries, goals, and ideas.
- Participate in activities your child enjoys.



BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Strong, healthy relationships are important throughout your life. They can impact your mental and physical well-being. As a child you learn the social skills you need to form and maintain relationships with others. But at any age you can learn ways to improve your relationships. It's important to know what a healthy relationship looks like and how to keep your connections supportive.

To build healthy relationships:

- Share your feelings honestly.
- Ask for what you need from others.
- Listen to others without judgement or blame. Be caring and empathetic.
- Disagree with others respectfully. Conflicts should not turn into personal attacks.
- Avoid being overly critical, angry outbursts, and violent behavior.
- Expect others to treat you with respect and honesty in return.
- Compromise. Try to come to agreements that work for everyone.
- Protect yourself from violent and abusive people. Set boundaries with others. Decide what you are and aren't willing to do. It's okay to say no.
- Learn the differences between healthy, unhealthy, and abusive ways of relating to others. Visit www.thehotline.org/healthy-relationships/relationship-spectrum.