



Your Health

Flu Season

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October marks the beginning of flu season in the United States. It is recommended that everyone over 6 months old receive a flu vaccination before the end of the month.

This vaccine is the most effective method to avoid the dangerous illness that becomes a problem in the autumn months.

THE FLU SHOT

Each fall you probably notice the heightened flu-vaccine awareness in your area. Hospitals, health clinics and even employers hold their own clinics to offer the important vaccination. Do yourself, your family and others in your community a favor by taking advantage of the flu shot.

The shot works by causing important blood proteins called antibodies to develop in your body.

Working together with viruses contained in the vaccine, these antibodies create an effective level of protection against flu infection.

These antibodies begin developing about two weeks after receiving the vaccine, so, it's important to get vaccinated early in the fall before the flu season in full force.

OTHER METHODS OF PROTECTION

While a vaccination is a proven method of protection from the flu, it still is possible to contract the illness. Factors such as age and your current health can lessen the level of effectiveness. That's why it also is extremely important to take



other measures to keep you and yours healthy this flu season. Below are some tips from the CDC on how to do just that.

- Avoid close contact with people who have developed a contagious illness;
- If you feel like you are experiencing

flu symptoms, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the usage of fever-reducing medications;

- Wash your hands with soap and water often; and
- Keep surfaces and objects

clean with bacteria-killing disinfectants.

SYMPTOMS AND RISKS

Commonly known as the flu, influenza is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. Symptoms can range from mild to severe,

but the flu can lead to death if left untreated.

Most cases of influenza include a fever, sore throat and fatigue. If you haven't been vaccinated and notice these symptoms during the flu season, seek medical help immediately.

Ladder Safety

As summer winds down, autumn presents beautiful leaves, cooler temperatures and the homestretch to the end of another calendar. It also invites those same beautiful leaves to clog your home's gutters. Make sure to keep yourself safe when using a ladder to perform this sometimes-dangerous task.

To reduce the time you spend on a ladder in the first place, consider installing a gutter protector. These innovative tools create a barrier that keeps leaves from blocking the important water-flow that your home and yard need.

Check with the experts at your local hardware store for the best protection system for your home.

As a homeowner, you will probably find yourself on a ladder for many reasons other than cleaning your gutters. Safety should be your main priority, as you put yourself at risk each time you climb the ascending steps.

INSPECT BEFORE CLIMBING

Ladders are built to strict safety regulations by their manufacturers. Ascending one that is not in proper working condition may result in a fall that causes severe injury or even death. Inspect all rungs to insure their integrity is still solid.

You also should clean any fluids that may have found their way onto the ladder, such as oil or grease. Insure that the safety feet are in proper position and free from any damage.

ALWAYS LOOK ABOVE

The Occupational Safety and

Health Administration reminds us to always avoid electrical hazards. Before scaling a ladder, make sure you will be free of power lines when you reach its peak. In fact, when climbing near any power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment, it is recommended to avoid using a metal ladder

altogether.

You should pay attention to the skies above you. If it looks dark or like a potential storm could be brewing, put away the ladder for another day.

Lightning can be fatal when standing at a high peak, especially if you're on a metal ladder.

OTHER SAFETY TIPS

OSHA has some great tips to keep you safe while using a portable ladder.

- Never place ladders on boxes or other unstable objects to add height.
- Use any available locking mechanisms on an extension ladder.

• Never exceed a ladder's maximum load rating. Consider any tools or equipment you will be hauling up the ladder with you, in addition to your own weight, in your calculation.

• Never use the top step of a ladder unless it was designed for that purpose.



Autumn Allergies

Allergies affect Americans all year round, but symptoms can become especially troublesome during the fall. People who are sensitive to mold and ragweed pollen may experience heightened exposure, causing itchy eyes, sore throats and runny noses.

Talk to your doctor to acquire the medication so you can enjoy the beautiful autumn weather.

Pollen levels are raised during autumn due to plants releasing small grains that fertilize other plants. Grasses, trees and different species of weeds all contribute to spreading these small grains through the wind. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, grasses are the most common causes of allergy.

TREATMENTS

Luckily, there are many over-the-counter and prescription medicines to help reduce the level of pollen-allergy symptoms you experience. The AAFA has listed several helpful medicines that your doctor might recommend for relief:

- **Antihistamines:** You might find this in pill, liquid or nasal spray form. Antihistamines are helpful in reducing the symptoms of a runny nose and reducing itchiness in the nose and eyes.

- **Decongestants:** These work by shrinking the lining of nasal passages to relieve stuffy noses. They're available in pills, liquids, nasal sprays and even drops.

- **Nasal corticosteroids:** A powerful nasal spray that reduces inflammation in the



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nose and blocks allergy reactions.

- **Immunotherapy:** For those who can't find relief with medications, immunotherapy is a treatment used to reduce or prevent the symptoms of allergies. You will typically see this method performed with a series of shots or in tablet form.

NATURAL METHODS

While medication is certainly an effective way to avoid the symptoms of fall allergies, there are still other methods you can use to limit your risk of reactions.

Individual pollen grains are typically too small to see with the naked eye. That doesn't mean they aren't surrounding

and even attaching to you while outdoors. It is crucial to take extra care while you are outside this autumn.

Be sure to wear sunglasses and a hat while enjoying the great outdoors. These are both effective ways to protect your eyes and hair from pollen intrusion.

Once you're inside, be sure

to change and wash the clothes you wore while outside. Don't dry your clothes on a clothesline during pollen season if you experience allergies.

You also should bathe and shampoo your hair before bed so your bedsheets don't get buildup from the grains that stuck to you.

Thanksgiving Food Safety

For many Americans, the tradition of Thanksgiving is packed with delicious food and family get-togethers. If you're the one cooking, be sure to do it safely to avoid making yourself and guests ill. Avoid the dangers of undercooked turkey so you can enjoy this special time of the year with your loved ones.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that salmonella causes 1 million cases of foodborne illnesses in America each year. The people most at risk for an infection are children under 5 and older adults with weakened-immune systems.

Salmonella symptoms usually cause fevers, diarrhea and abdominal cramps that may start as soon as 12 hours after an infection. The CDC states this illness usually dissipates within four to seven days without medical treatment.

However, if the symptoms don't get better, it is critical to see your doctor. Severe cases can lead to death if not properly treated with the right antibiotics.

THAWING YOUR BIRD

Don't be afraid to purchase your turkey weeks before Thanksgiving. Freezing your bird will keep it safe until you are ready to prepare it. Do be careful during the thawing process, as that's where dangerous bacteria can begin growing.

Never thaw a turkey at room temperature. After about two hours, its temperature will likely reach the danger zone — 40 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Instead, plan to let it thaw in the refrigerator or in a sink of cold water that is changed every 30 minutes.



STEPS FOR FOOD SAFETY

Once your turkey is thoroughly thawed, you will want to follow the CDC's four-step guide to food safety.

- **Cook:** Allow your bird to cook to its correct internal temperature. The United States Department of Agriculture recommends tur-

key be cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

- **Clean:** Wash your hands and cooking surfaces often to rid areas of illness-causing bacteria.

- **Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. Bacteria can form in only two hours in many foods.

- **Separate:** Make sure to

keep raw foods away from your already cooked items. It is easy for bacteria to spread from one to another.

LEFTOVERS

Thanksgiving typically provides Americans with plenty of leftovers. Make sure they are refrigerated as soon as possi-

ble. Foods at room temperature can develop *Clostridium perfringens*, which is the second most common bacterial cause of food poisoning.

Your leftovers should be stored at 40 degrees Fahrenheit temperatures at the highest, to prevent dangerous bacteria from forming.



National Family History Day

Thanksgiving is traditionally a day when Americans gather with friends and family to enjoy each other's company and a hearty meal. Did you know that it also is National Family History Day?

The Offices of the U.S. Surgeon General started the day in 2004 to encourage families to discuss and research health problems that run in their bloodline.

Family health history is a huge tool used to determine screening times and risks of dangerous conditions.

Knowing the history of diseases can help doctors catch them before they turn into something more serious.

IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

You have probably noticed similar physical traits amongst some of your family members.

Keep in mind that there may be other similarities that can put you more at risk for serious diseases. Therefore, it is critical to do research and share the findings with your doctor.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that if the following conditions are present in your family history, you may be at greater risk.

- **Breast cancer:** Current recommendations state breast-cancer screenings should begin at age 40. If anyone at all (mother or father's side) has ever had breast cancer, doctors may want to begin

screenings sooner.

- **Heart disease:** Over 610,000 people die from heart disease in the U.S. each year. Talk to your doctor if this condition runs in your family to take precautionary steps to reduce your risk. A professional may choose to place you on medication to lower or maintain your levels of this deadly disease.

- **Diabetes:** An estimated 86 million Americans have pre-diabetes. This means blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not quite enough to diagnose diabetes. Your family history will help doctors

determine the best steps to reverse, prevent or delay this condition.

FAMILY HEALTH PORTRAIT

The Surgeon General has created a powerful tool that makes recording family health history simple. My Family Health Portrait is available at familyhistory.hhs.gov and gives you the chance to list all medical conditions your family has experienced.

This Thanksgiving, be sure to discuss the importance of your family members filling out this portfolio and sharing it with their medical professionals.

Fall Fitness

Autumn brings cooler temperatures and creates new exercise opportunities that might not have been possible in the blazing heat of summer. It's time to get outdoors and enjoy the beautiful views and crisp air that autumn offers.

Now that you might be spending more time exercising outdoors, consider freezing your gym membership. Some gyms may require you still pay a small monthly premium to retain your account, but you will avoid paying expensive startup fees once you sign up again. Inquire with the experts at your local gym about their policies on the matter.

ENJOY THE VIEWS

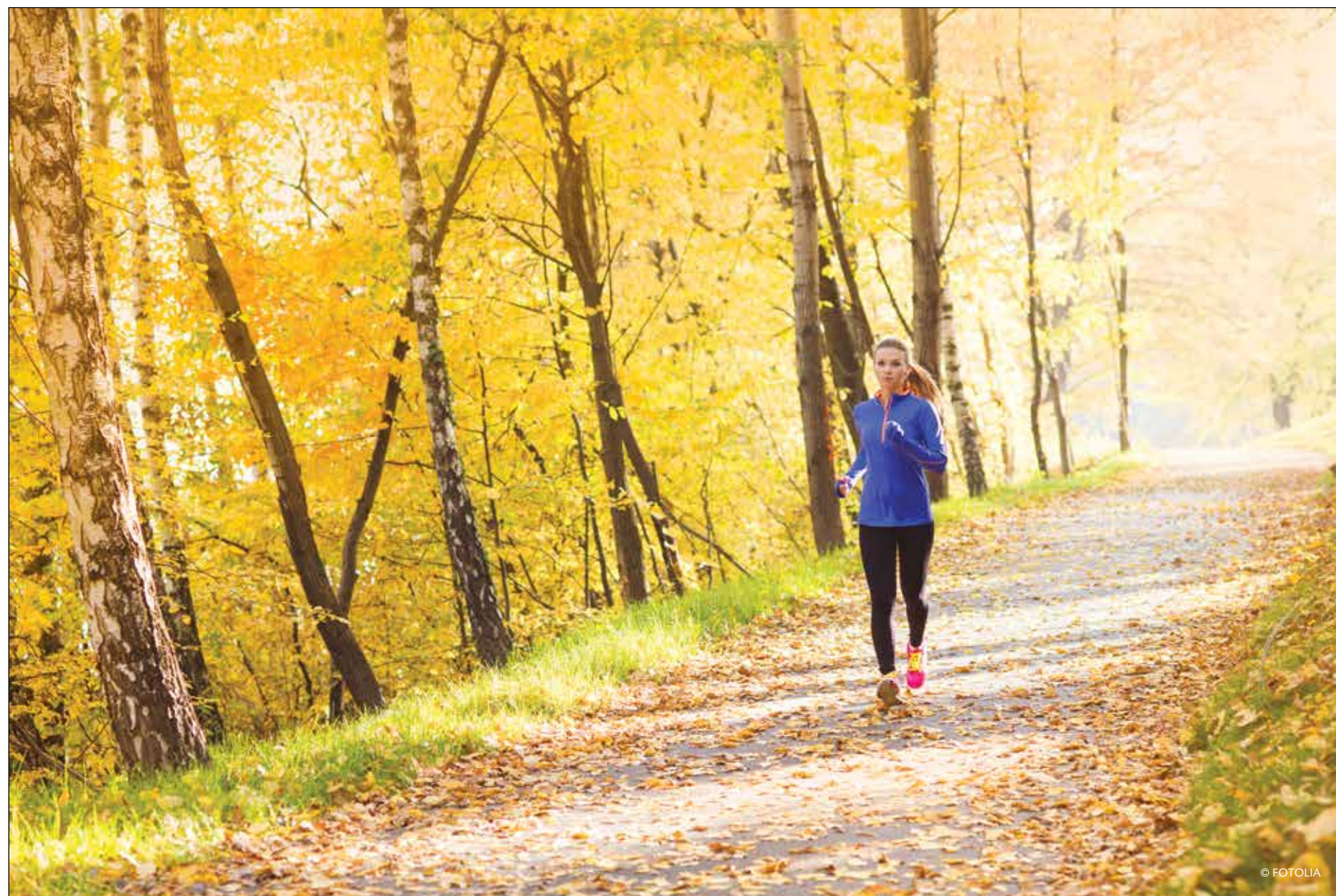
Autumn hiking affords you beautiful views of changing leaves and wildlife. Hiking is a great activity to take in all the views and get some fantastic cardiovascular exercise.

The American Heart Association credits walking briskly with lowering the risk of high blood pressure, dangerous cholesterol levels and even diabetes. Hiking trails can have different levels of difficulty that might include more hills or rugged terrains. Start slowly, but once you become a hiking expert, you may enjoy the more rigorous trails.

Check with your local wildlife refuge for the best trails for your hiking experience. Make sure to use a map when you get started to avoid becoming lost.

KEEPING WARM

Exercising outdoors in



autumn can make finding the proper clothing tricky. You will benefit from dressing in layers, as you might find yourself overheating as your body temperature rises. Remaining comfortable is crucial during a workout and can lead to longer perfor-

mance.

The layer that is against your skin should be an undershirt made from a wool blend or a synthetic material called polypropylene. Both materials make it possible for your sweat to escape.

For your warm layer, you'll

want to wear a loose-weave wool sweatshirt. This fabric allows for maximum air flow and will keep you dry even if it gets wet itself.

STAY SAFE AT NIGHT

As it begins getting dark earlier in the day, you should

either adjust your workout schedule or take extra safety precautions.

Be sure you are wearing reflective clothing if you are jogging near a road. For bikers, consider installing a headlight on your bike, and be sure you are using reflectors.

A Healthy Winter

Autumn is a nice break between summer's blazing heat and winter's brutal cold. While you are enjoying the comfortable temperatures during the fall, it is important to spend some time preparing yourself and your home for the upcoming cold.

Doing so can ensure a healthy winter season safe from the potential dangers that come with cold, icy temperatures.

BREATHING HEALTHY AIR

You might put much thought into your furnace during the summer and fall months. Before turning it on during colder weather, it will likely require some maintenance to ensure you are breathing healthy air.

Set up a thorough inspection with a local heating and air professional to ease your mind and make sure everything is working properly. A technician's assessment of your system might include your ductwork, which over time can build up moisture, mold and mildew. An inspection can also uncover sediment buildups that can weaken your furnace's efficiency and create a fire hazard.

If your furnace is over 15 years old, the United States Department of Energy recommends replacing it with a new, efficient system. A unit that features the Energy Star logo can be 15 percent more efficient than other units.

PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) EMERGENCIES

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can cause serious health issues. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend installing a CO detector to alert you of the presence of CO in your home. This fall, be sure to check the batteries in your detector to make sure it is in proper working order.

Learning the symptoms of CO poisoning can help you act quickly in the face of an emergency. These include headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. Exit your home and call 911 immediately if you believe CO poisoning is affecting you or someone you love.

