

TAKE CHARGE!



December 2021

The Gift of Giving Helping others helps you, too.

Volunteers make a vital difference in the lives of others. And volunteering your time and efforts can benefit your own health as well — from reducing stress to boosting self-confidence and becoming more content over time.

People volunteer for different reasons: to explore health care careers, sharpen skills needed for work, stay active during retirement, and put their free time to good use. While volunteers come from many backgrounds, they all share the desire to help others. In return, research has shown that volunteering may provide some important benefits, such as:

Lower risk of depression: The social interaction and support system within volunteering based on common interests have been shown to decrease depression.

Reduced stress: Time spent helping others may raise your sense of meaning and appreciation, both given and received, which can have a stress-reducing effect.

Gaining new skills and experience: The work that volunteers provide is essential on many levels, which gives them a sense of purpose.

Socializing with others: Fundamental to volunteering is making new friends and building relationships as part of a shared activity together.

In addition, regular volunteering can improve your self-confidence and sense of self-worth, as you improve someone else's life.

Volunteer opportunities include: museums, libraries, senior centers, service organizations, local animal shelters, youth organizations, national parks or conservation efforts (may vary due to COVID-19 conditions).

Learn more at volunteer.gov.



“When the world is so complicated, the simple gift of friendship is within all of our hands.”

— Maria Shriver

city events

Deferred Compensation Webinars

Nearing Retirement

Wednesday, December 1

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Click [here](#) to register

Investment Overview and Upcoming Fund Changes

Monday, December 6

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Click [here](#) to register

Friday, December 10

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Click [here](#) to register

End of Year Check In

Wednesday, December 15

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm

Click [here](#) to register

Managing Stress Series: Taking Care of Yourself Webinar

Wednesday, December 1

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Click [here](#) to join; select Dec. 1

Learning to Embrace Failure Webinar

Thursday, December 2

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Click [here](#) to join

Sandwich Generation Webinar

Wednesday, December 8

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Click [here](#) to join

Managing Stress Series: Healthy Tips and Information Webinar

Wednesday, December 8

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Click [here](#) to join; select Dec. 8

Managing Stress Series: Building Resilience Webinar

Wednesday, December 15

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm

Click [here](#) to join; select Dec. 15

Toning Up Made Easy

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

No time to fit in hour-long exercise routines?

No sweat. Boosting your physical fitness is a good idea. It can become routine when you weave it into your daily lifestyle, even during the busy holiday season. The trick is keeping exercise simple so you won't view it as one more thing you must do.

Learn ways every day to get up and move more.

Try these (and remember to warm up with light exercise first):

- Welcome your day with a walk in the fresh air.
- Work up a sweat indoors with physical chores; sweep, vacuum or wash windows.
- Pace while thinking or talking on a phone.
- Garden, or sweep out the garage or walkways.
- Walk through a shopping mall after parking several blocks away.
- Add stretching and walking breaks to boost energy and metabolism.
- Do two sets of seven strength-training movements for ten minutes.
- Limber up with some squats and lunges.
- Do some errands on foot trips to the store, hair salon or post office.
- Meet a friend for a scenic walk in the park.

Kick it up a notch:

- Use an exercise machine while you watch a favorite TV series; you'll look forward to viewing the show's progress at your next workout.
- Try exercise bands — a portable, easy way to build muscle.
- Liven up your solo workouts with music.
- Exercise with a good friend to keep each other committed; the buddy system is a proven way to stay motivated.
- Swim at a community pool after work instead of passively watching TV.
- Treat yourself to golf lessons, and practice.

Mix up your activities

to keep fitness pursuits interesting and pleasurable. Examples: Alternate daily walks with biking, or if your strength training workout becomes tedious, create multiple routines and vary them each week.



Improving your physical fitness offers

many health benefits. Regular exercise can reduce your risk of chronic disease, improve your balance and coordination, help you lose weight, and even boost your self-esteem. And you can reap these benefits regardless of your age or physical ability. The current exercise guide for healthy adults:

- At least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity.
- Strength training exercises of all the major muscle groups at least twice a week.

Improve Your Relaxation Techniques

Learning to relax can help you be resilient to stress. But taking a little time out to get away from work and personal tasks isn't always enough to truly relax your mind and body.

That's why learning how to strengthen your relaxation skills can help you trigger your body's **relaxation response**. It's the opposite of a stress response and results in calmer breathing, lower blood pressure, better digestion and a reduced heart rate.



Take five to ten minutes to regularly use these relaxation techniques.

Try these:

- **Autogenic (self-generated) relaxation** involves visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress. Visualize a peaceful setting and focus on slow, relaxing breathing while feeling your muscles relax.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation** helps you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. Start with your toes and work up to your head or go in the opposite direction and tense muscles in each part of your body for about five seconds, relax for 30 seconds and repeat.

Remember, your ability to relax improves with practice. Make patience a habit.



TIP of the MONTH



Plan for Nutrition

Things can get busy during the holidays, but you and your family can still eat well. The key is planning. Choose recipes, plan a week's worth of meals, make a grocery list, and shop so you'll have the necessary ingredients on hand. Repeat your basic plan weekly and occasionally add new recipes to simplify meal times.

Winter Family Fun

Ready for some fun family pursuits? Don't let the chilly months and less daylight hold you back. Whatever the size of your family — mom, dad, kids, grandparents, siblings — daytime, night time, indoors or outdoors, take time for a midweek break or weekend family adventure, and have fun together.

Start by stepping outside. Exploring the outdoors can invigorate and energize you. Walk through a park, toss a football or try snowshoeing or roller skating, weather permitting. As long as kids bundle up and stay safe, being outside in the cold offers mental and physical benefits for them and for adults.

Indoors, spend warm, cozy evenings playing card games or board games. Read novels or historical sagas out loud to your audience. Try out an online dancercise routine. Have fun family movie nights or camping nights with sleeping bags. Baking nights can provide a relaxing finish before bedtime.

On bad weather days, gyms and indoor swimming pools are a great outlet for your kids to run around and enjoy, or maybe explore an intramural pickup basketball league. At night, do some stargazing, a unique experience for a family to search and admire the stars together.

Learn more at funathomewithkids.com.



Secrets of Sugars

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Sugar: It's a word with a bad reputation. But there's more to know about this sweetener, and the news isn't all bad.

The truth is, Americans do eat too much sugar, and the No. 1 source is

sweetened beverages, such as soft drinks,

coffee beverages and fruit drinks. Baked goods, candy, ice cream and chocolate are also high in sugar.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend no more than 12 teaspoons (48 grams) of **added sugars** per day. Unfortunately, most Americans get closer to 22 teaspoons (88 grams) daily, which is well above the recommendation.

What are added sugars? They are any sweetener that's added to food, including sugar, high fructose corn syrup, honey or syrup. And yes, even sugars with unusual names, such as **evaporated cane juice, agave or date sugar** are considered added sugars. These products are often marketed as healthy alternatives due to the presence of trace minerals — but you'd need to eat cups of them to get any substantial quantities of minerals (don't try that).

Too much of any added sugar — even one that *sounds* healthy — is problematic since it increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers.

What doesn't count as added sugar? **Natural sugar** occurs naturally in fruit, sweet vegetables, milk and yogurt (e.g., lactose or milk sugar). Since these foods also contain vitamins, minerals, protein (in dairy) and fiber (in fruit), the sugar is not as problematic.

Natural sugars do not count toward the DGA's limit of 12 teaspoons of added sugar per day. That means you can enjoy whole fruit; the DGA recommends two cups a day.



Festive Egg and Vegetable Casserole

EASY recipe

1 tbsp butter	5 cups chopped kale or spinach
1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil	12 eggs
2 cloves garlic, minced	½ tsp salt
2 medium red peppers, chopped	1 cup crumbled goat or feta cheese, <i>divided</i>
6 green onions, sliced	



Preheat oven to 350°F. **Grease** a casserole dish with butter. **In** a large pan over medium heat, add olive oil. **Once** hot, add garlic, peppers and green onions, and cook about 8-10 minutes. **Add** kale or spinach and let wilt, about 3 minutes. **Crack** eggs into large bowl. **Scramble** with fork. **Add** salt, ½ cup cheese and cooked vegetables. **Mix** well. **Add** mixture to casserole dish. **Top** with cheese and bake 30 minutes. **Serve** with hot sauce (optional).

Makes 6 servings. Per serving: 281 calories | 19g protein | 18g total fat | 7g saturated fat | 6g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 12g carbohydrate | 4g sugar | 4g fiber | 435mg sodium

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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- **Use Your 2021 Health Flexible Spending Account (FSA):** If you'd like to reduce your remaining Health FSA balance by December 31, 2021, see eligible expenses [here](#). You may also search [FSastore.com](https://www.fsastore.com) for 100% FSA-eligible products.
- **The Path to Quitting Starts Now.** If you've thought about quitting tobacco or nicotine, Quit for Life on Rally Coach can help. Get all the tools and resources you need to quit – and stay quit – at no additional cost. All regular employees and adult family members are eligible. Get started at Quitnow.net or call 1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE TTY 711.
- **New in 2022! Conquer Your Pain in More Ways:** Starting in January, Hinge Health* is expanding the chronic back and joint pain management program to include prevention, acute pain management due to a recent injury, and pre- or post-surgery support. New programs features include a virtual physical therapy visit for all joint and muscle groups, app based exercise therapy, and expert medical opinion. There will be no cost to employees or their eligible family members. Look for more information in January. To apply for the chronic pain management program, go to hingehealth.com/cityofseattle.

*Not available to employees on the Local 27, Local 77 and SPOG benefit programs, Seattle Housing Authority or COBRA participants.

EXPERT advice — Elizabeth Smoots, MD



December is Safe Toys & Gifts Month.

Q: Cold, flu and COVID-19 symptoms?



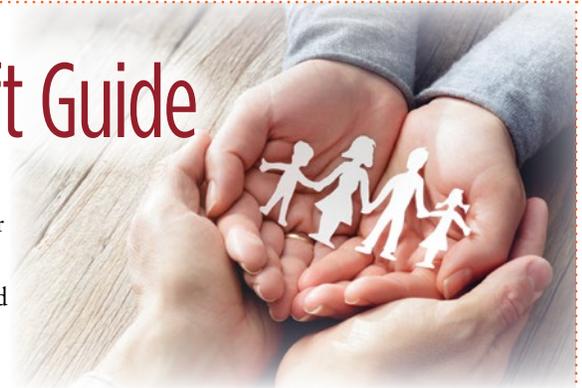
A: The viruses that cause colds, influenza and COVID-19 spread in respiratory droplets and often have similar symptoms. When you're trying to tell which condition you have, consider some of these differences.

COVID-19 vs. a cold: Shortness of breath, fever, fatigue, muscle aches and loss of taste and smell occur more commonly with COVID-19 than the common cold. Colds are more likely to involve sneezing.

COVID-19 vs. the flu: Both conditions can cause a cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, fever, fatigue, muscle aches and shortness of breath. Unlike influenza, COVID-19 often involves the loss of taste or smell; the loss often occurs early in the illness without a stuffy nose.

When to get tested: It's often difficult to tell what condition you have based on your symptoms alone. Get tested if there's a possibility you could have COVID-19 since the risk of serious illness is higher than with other common viruses. If you need help finding a testing site, check with your local health department or district. And if you haven't already, get vaccinated for COVID-19.

Annual Safe Gift Guide



For the new driver:

- **Roadside safety kit** that includes jumper cables, flares, handwarmers and more.
- **Ice scraper**, snow brush and a windshield defogger cloth.

For the runner or walker:

- **Personal alarms** — these come in a variety of forms, including a keychain or wristband.
- **High-visibility vest** or reflector strips.

For the new parent:

- **Baby safety kits** — everything the new parent needs to protect their bundle of joy, including doorknob covers and plug protectors.
- **Safety gates** — there are many models, including expandable gates to fit doorways or stairs.

Check [cpsc.gov](https://www.cpsc.gov) to make sure no safety recalls have been issued.

For seniors:

- **Wearable remote heart monitors** — these lightweight, wearable sensors will collect and send real-time data to a host company, which can provide it to doctors or caregivers.
- **Medication managers** — some smart watches work in conjunction with pill dispensers and some can even alert caregivers or health care providers that medications aren't being taken. There are also medication alarm clocks and medication dispensers with alarms. For the technically savvy, there are also apps.



Black ice is difficult to see and extremely dangerous.

It's a glaze of ice formed on pavement due to a light freezing rain or refreezing of snow or water. Use extra caution whenever conditions exist for black ice on the road. Drive slower than the posted speed limit and extend your braking distance. If you realize you're driving on black ice, avoid sudden moves; if you're skidding, lift your foot off the accelerator and glide across the ice until you find traction.