



NOVEMBER 2022

# Wellness Matters

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## Your Wellness Journey

# Protect Against Winter Viruses

Influenza (flu) hospitalizations have significantly risen across the United States in recent weeks. According to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hospitalizations have reached levels that are generally not seen until later in the flu season, around December.

So far this season, the CDC estimates that the flu has caused at least 880,000 illnesses, 6,900 hospitalizations, and 360 deaths. Flu hospitalizations are rising across all age groups, especially children. The surge comes as other respiratory viruses, including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), are also spiking in kids. The first flu-associated pediatric death of the 2022-23 season was also recently reported.

Doctors are not required to report each positive flu test to public health officials, so the CDC monitors likely flu activity by looking at “influenza-like

illnesses.” These include a fever of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit and a cough or sore throat without any other known cause.

While the flu and similar viral illnesses are rising nationwide, they’re notably high across the Southeast and the East Coast—from Texas to Georgia and South Carolina to New Jersey.



**What You Can Do** There are early signs that this year’s flu shot will help keep people out of the hospital. A CDC report on Chile’s flu season found that their vaccine was 49% protective against flu-related hospitalizations. That may seem low, but from 2015 to 2020, flu shot effectiveness in the United States ranged from 29% to 48%.

It’s unclear whether this year’s flu shots in the United States will be as effective as they were during Chile’s flu season. However, the shots used in both countries have one of the same targets—the H3N2 flu strain—which accounts for a majority of detected US flu cases.

With the flu, RSV, and other respiratory viruses circulating, the CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older get an annual flu shot. The agency said that children up to 8 years old might need two shots this year, especially if they’ve never had the vaccine.

If you are determined to avoid flu, RSV, and other viruses this season, take the following steps to help protect you and your family:

- ✓ Avoid close contact with those who are ill
- ✓ Wash hands often
- ✓ Cover coughs and sneezes
- ✓ Clean and disinfect surfaces
- ✓ Stay home when sick

## The Weather's Impact on Your Energy

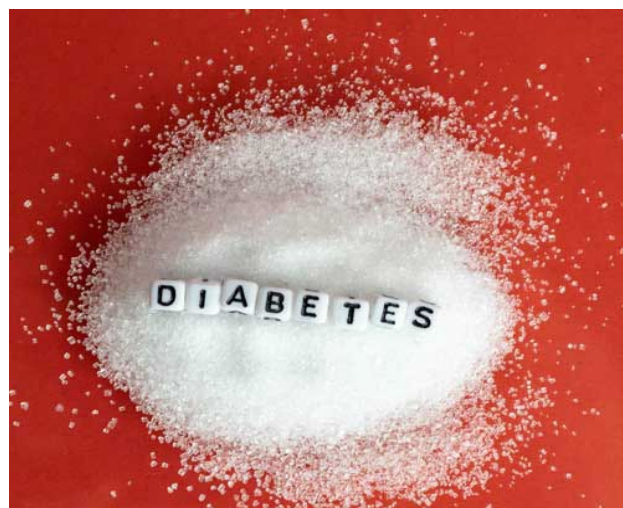
Are you energized and happy on a warm, sunny day? Does hot weather make you grumpy? Do you feel bummed on a rainy or gloomy day?

Temperature, humidity, and atmospheric pressure can disrupt your circadian rhythm and impact your mental health, including your level of energy.

Typically, cold weather signals your body to settle down, resulting in less energy during winter. Warmer temperatures can boost your energy along with your mood, but only up to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. After that, you may feel the urge to escape the heat.

Sunlight can also impact your energy level. Light tells your circadian clock to stay awake, and darkness signals that it's time to rest. As a result, you may feel groggy as the days get shorter in the winter months. If you're struggling to get through the winter season or your daily functions are affected by your mood or energy level, reach out to your doctor for help. You may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a recurring depression that affects individuals during the winter months and recedes during the spring and summer.

It is estimated that between 4 and 6 percent of Americans suffer from SAD, with three-quarters of those affected being women, mostly in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. In severe cases, your doctor can prescribe medication, but oftentimes self-help tactics can be just as effective: get outside, exercise regularly, find ways to relax, learn how to manage stress better, and increase the amount of light in your home by opening blinds and trimming trees that block sunlight.



## Healthy & Nutritious

### November is American Diabetes Month

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 37 million American adults have diabetes, and 1 in 5 don't even know they have it. While Type 1 diabetes can't be prevented, you can take the following steps to help prevent Type 2 diabetes:

- **Stick to a healthy diet.** Consume plenty of fiber and whole grains, and understand how the foods you eat affect your blood sugar levels.
- **Get more exercise.** Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise daily. Incorporate both aerobic and resistance training.
- **Manage your weight.** If you're overweight, weight control can be an essential part of diabetes prevention.

In the last 20 years, the number of adults diagnosed with diabetes has more than doubled. Take control now during American Diabetes Month, and have your blood sugar levels tested by your doctor.