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# Wellness Matters

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Your Healthy Body

## Stay Healthy: Hand Hygiene

*With the coronavirus pandemic here and flu season around the corner, practicing good hand hygiene is a proven way to prevent the spread of germs.*

### Make Clean Choices

It is not always possible or convenient to wash our hands as often as needed. When you can't get to a sink, experts recommend you use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Soap and water are ideal when hands are visibly dirty, but hand sanitizers are fast-acting and can reduce the amount of germs on your skin.

### Soap and Water

Remember that water simply rinses dirt and germs away; soap is what actually prevents them from sticking to your skin.

For best results, wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Rub hands together, lathering and scrubbing all surfaces for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse

your hands well under running water and dry using a paper towel or air dryer. When in a public bathroom, use your paper towel to open the bathroom door.



### Hand Sanitizer

Evidence shows that hand sanitizers are more effective than soap in preventing infection,

are less irritating to the skin, and are easier to use. The main ingredient is alcohol, which kills 99.99% of bacteria in about 15 seconds. Contrary to popular belief, frequent use of a hand sanitizer will not cause antibacterial resistance. Hand sanitizers evaporate quickly and thoroughly, so there is no residue left on your hands where germs can grow. They are usually gentle to the skin, so

while it is true that alcohol by itself can be drying to the skin, hand sanitizers are typically formulated with moisturizers to prevent this.

For best results, apply the product to the palm of one hand and then rub your hands together. Rub product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until they are dry. Note that the volume needed to reduce the number of bacteria on hands varies by product; be sure to read product instructions.

### Cleanse Your Hands Often

Cleansing can help avoid illness but also limits the spread of germs to others. Always clean your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling animals, animal waste, or garbage. Germs are invisible but present—use common sense to keep yourself and others safe.

## Making Better Decisions

According to the American Psychological Association, 59% of Americans reported that the coronavirus is seriously impacting their day-to-day lives. When you are experiencing anxiety, it often becomes tough to make reasonable choices. That is concerning, as many families are faced with high-stake decisions during the pandemic—decisions involving health, livelihoods, and employment.

If you're feeling anxious, consider these techniques to make sound decisions:

### Engage in calming activities

What activities do you like that have a calming effect and boost your mood? Maybe it is walking, catching up with a friend, meditating, or working on a favorite craft. Make time for these activities regularly to give your mind a rest.

### Charge up your health

Take care of your body by eating healthy, sleeping enough, and exercising often:

- Good eating habits help you feel energized to tackle important decisions.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine for 3-4 hours before bedtime; stick to a consistent sleep schedule and refrain from using electronics for at least an hour before hitting the sack.
- Regular exercise affects your sleep quality and daytime energy level.

### Determine what you can (and can't) control

Learn to accept that you cannot control everything that happens around you. Define your own *circle of control* during this uncertain time; this could include how you treat others, what you do to stay healthy, how you handle emotions, or your future goals.

At the end of the day, everyone is making the best decisions possible with the information at hand during the pandemic. Go easy on yourself.



## Healthy & Nutritious Low-Stress Diet Tips

Did you know that the foods you eat can affect your overall stress? When left unchecked, chronic stress can increase your risk for conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, depression, and anxiety. To make matters worse, when you're stressed you may eat poorly, which can lead to a damaging, endless cycle.

Consume a magnesium-rich diet or take a supplement, if needed. Plus, consider these examples of healthy, low-stress food options:

- Potassium-rich foods: bananas
- Foods rich in vitamin C: avocados
- Leafy-green vegetables: spinach
- Whole-grain carbohydrates: brown rice
- Fatty fish: salmon and tuna
- Nuts: pistachios, walnuts, and almonds

If you're thirsty, reach for water or milk instead of caffeinated drinks or soda. Or try a comforting cup of chamomile tea for a boost of feel-good hormones; made from dried chamomile flowers, this tea is widely thought to help you relax and fall asleep more easily.