

# Newsflash

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## A Little Bit Faster is Better

Walking at any speed is beneficial, but faster may be better. A recent study found that older adults who walked at a brisk pace were up to 32 percent less likely to die in the nine years after the study than those who defined themselves as slow walkers. Self-defined average-pace walkers were 24 percent less likely to die of any cause. This held true even if walkers were overweight, smoked, or had heart disease.



## Safe Pumpkin Carving

Use a carving kit, available in stores, rather than a kitchen knife, which can get stuck and injure you when you remove it. The kits contain tools designed for various carving functions, such as sawing through the rind, making eye holes and scooping out the inside.



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## Autumn Health and Safety Tips

Follow these tips to help you and your family stay safe and healthy this autumn!

**Keep your kids safe and healthy.** Get involved with your kids' activities at home and at school to help ensure they are safe and healthy.

**Take steps to prevent the flu.** The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year in the fall. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands often. Stay home if you get sick.

**Get smart about antibiotics.** Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections, but not viral infections. The common cold and the flu are viral infections, so avoid using antibiotics if you have one of these. Using antibiotics when they are not needed causes some bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic, and therefore stronger and harder to kill. See your doctor or nurse to find out if your illness is bacterial or viral.

**Have a safe and healthy Halloween.** Make Halloween festivities fun, safe, and healthy for trick-or-treaters and party guests.

**Test and replace batteries.** Check or replace carbon monoxide batteries twice a year when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. Replace smoke alarm alkaline batteries at least once a year. Test alarms every month to ensure they work properly.

**Keep food safe.** Food is center stage during the holidays. Be sure to keep it safe by following basic food safety steps. Clean hands and surfaces often. Separate foods to avoid cross-contamination. Cook to proper temperatures. Chill promptly.

**Learn your family history.** National Family History Day is observed on Thanksgiving Day. Over the holiday or at another family gathering, talk about and write down the health conditions that run in your family. Learning about your family's health history can help you take steps to ensure a longer, healthier future together.

**Be prepared for cold weather.** Exposure to cold temperatures can cause serious health problems. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk, but anyone can be affected. Know how to prevent health problems and what to do if a cold-weather emergency arises. Remember that using space heaters and fireplaces can increase the risk of household fires and carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Don't drink and drive.** Alcohol use impairs skills needed to drive a car safely. It slows reaction time and impairs judgement and coordination. Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes kill someone every 31 minutes and non-fatally injure someone every two minutes. Don't drink and drive, and don't let others drink and drive.

**Wash your hands.** Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It's best to wash your hands with soap and clean running water for 20 seconds. If that's not possible, use alcohol-based hand rubs.

## Preserve Your Nutrients

Cooking methods that involve high heat, water, or both can destroy some of the nutrients in fruits and vegetables. Here's how to get the most from nutritional power.

**COOKED OR RAW?** High temperatures can destroy 15 to 30 percent of some of the vitamins in vegetables. Boiling leaches another 10 to 20 percent, and up to 15 percent of the minerals.

But you can limit those losses by microwaving, sautéing, or steaming. And cooking actually increases the potency of some nutrients by helping to break down the cell walls of the plant. For example, cooking increases the availability of antioxidants in carrots, spinach, and tomatoes.

Still, including some raw produce in your diet expands your options and can help you reach the recommended five to nine daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Raw vegetables can replace potato chips or other caloric fare as snacks. And fresh fruit, especially with a low-fat whipped topping, makes great desserts. Increase your intake of raw vegetables slowly though, since they can cause gas.

**FRESH OR FROZEN?** For taste and nutrition, fruits and vegetables from the garden or farm are best. But the "fresh" vegetables most of us eat have been hauled or flown across the country and then displayed for several days in stores, giving plenty of time for air, heat, and light to diminish their vitamin content.

Even fruit, which continues to ripen after picking, can lose nutrients by the time you get it to the table. So frozen produce, which is usually flash-frozen soon after picking, can be at least as nutritious. Frozen fruits and vegetables can last for about a year.

Most canned produce doesn't stack up against fresh or frozen, since much of its vitamin content is destroyed by high processing temperatures or lost in the water in the can. And canned fruit is often packed in high-calorie syrup.

**NOW YOU'RE COOKING.** To maximize healthfulness, follow these tips when buying or cooking produce.

**Microwave right.** Use a microwave-safe dish and just enough water to keep the food from burning (around 1 teaspoon for 2 servings). Cover with plastic wrap or waxed paper.

**Steam, don't boil.** If you don't have an electric steamer, get an insert for a regular pot that holds the food above a small amount of boiling water. Save the water to cook rice or add to soup.

**Stir-fry.** Baking, roasting, and grilling expose food to high temperatures for longer times. Frying does too, though stir-frying cut-up vegetables in a bit of oil can minimize the losses.

**Plant a garden.** Don't worry if you have minimal space. Herbs, peppers, and tomatoes, for example, can grow in pots as long as they get adequate light.

**Choose seasonal produce.** Visit farmers' markets when possible to reduce the time from farm to table.

**Consider organic.** Some organically grown fruits and vegetables, such as apples and tomatoes, appear to have higher amounts of certain nutrients.

**Get produce that lasts.** Include some less-perishable vegetables, such as cabbage, carrots, and potatoes, in your cart.

**Make smoothies.** Put fruit or vegetables in a blender with low-fat yogurt or a little juice to make a nutritious drink.

## Keeping Your Microbiome Health

Your gut does more than digest food. It's home to trillions of bacteria, fungi, and yeasts that make up your gut microbiome. Some of those bugs can cause disease, but most are good, helping your GI tract run smoothly by digesting food and metabolizing nutrients. And some research, mostly in animals, hints that the bacteria may also ward off infections, control weight, and protect against heart disease.

The research is early, but it's worth keeping your belly bacteria healthy. How? They thrive on high-fiber foods as well as fermented foods such as sauerkraut or plain yogurt with live cultures.

Certain drugs can harm your microbiome, especially antibiotics. They can kill good bacteria in your gut along with the bad. That's one reason you shouldn't take those drugs unless they're really needed. And it explains why about 30 percent of people on antibiotics get diarrhea and 15 to 20 percent of them end up with *C. diff*.

If you do need antibiotics, ask your doctor whether you should also take probiotic supplements. In most other cases, however, you probably don't need a probiotic. Other than helping with antibiotic-related diarrhea, there's no solid research that shows they prevent other adverse side effects.

