



A Special Supplement of  
**THE LAURINBURG  
 EXCHANGE**

## Get the facts about the cold and flu



The common cold and influenza are two contagious viruses that many people may be all too aware of. Although colds and flu can be contracted any time of the year, winter tends to be a prime time for cold and flu outbreaks, as more time spent indoors in close proximity to others provides an easy way for viruses to pass from one person to another.

Despite how common these illnesses can be, there seems to be no shortage of misinformation concerning prevention and treatment of the viruses. Those who think they know all about a cold or the flu can still benefit from a refresher course, which may even debunk some prevailing myths about both ailments.

### Cold

Colds are relatively minor infections of the throat and nose that are caused by more than 200 different viruses. Rhinovirus is the most common cause, which accounts for between 10 and 40 percent of infections, advises the American Lung Association. Adults get an average of two to four colds per year, while children suffer six to eight colds annually. In fact,

in the United States, colds account for more visits to the doctor than any other condition, says the ALA.

The Cleveland Clinic states colds are contracted from inhalation of microscopic particles in the air or from contact with contaminated surfaces. Symptoms can include runny nose, sneezing and nasal congestion, often with sore throat, mild cough, mild aches/ fatigue, and fever in youngsters.

### Influenza

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness that is caused by the influenza virus. It infects the throat, nose and sometimes the lungs, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Like colds, the flu also can be spread through tiny droplets made when infected individuals cough, sneeze or talk, or by touching infected surfaces.

One common misconception about the flu is that it can be contracted from the flu vaccine. This is not true. Harvard Medical School says the flu shot is made from an inactivated virus that can't transmit infection. People who get sick after receiving a flu vaccination were going to get sick anyway, as it takes a week or two to get protection from the vaccine. Many people assume that because they became sick after getting the vaccine, the flu shot caused their illness.

Even though the flu and colds share some symptoms, such as runny nose, sneezing, hoarseness, and cough, the flu is not just a bad cold. While very few people have landed in the hospital with a cold, the flu can be so severe as to require hospitalization.

Steering clear of people who are sick, frequently washing hands, sterilizing common surfaces, and getting the flu shot are ways to prevent illness. Antibiotics are not effective against the cold and flu, and antiviral medication can lessen the effects and shorten the duration of flu but may not be able to prevent it.

The ALA notes that herbal and mineral products have received a lot of publicity as cold and flu remedies, but insists that such claims are not solidly supported by science. If symptoms do not abate, see a doctor.

## What is occupational wellness?



Wellness is a broad term that can refer to various aspects of daily life. Disciplines like yoga and meditation might be the first things to come to mind when people think of wellness, but focusing on wellness at work can have positive, lasting effects on overall well-being as well.

Occupational wellness is not necessarily a familiar term, but it's something that most professionals strive for. According to the Student Health and Counseling Services at the University of California, Davis, occupational wellness inspires people to find work from which they will gain personal satisfaction and find enrichment. Occupational wellness promotes the exploration of various career options and the pursuit of those opportunities that most appeal to each individual.

While it may seem like common sense to aspire for an engaging, enjoyable career, the effect that finding such a career can have on overall well-being might not be so apparent. In an analysis of a recent Gallup World Poll, a survey that asks hundreds of thousands of workers across the globe about their jobs and their job satisfaction, Harvard Business Review found there is a correlation between job satisfaction and life evaluations. People who report being satisfied with their jobs seem to be happier overall.

So how can one embrace the concept of occupational wellness? UC Davis offers individuals the following suggestions as they begin their journeys to occupational wellness.

- Perform some self-reflection. Reflect on yourself and what you need out of a job. Are there certain occupational tasks you enjoy? Are there some you find burdensome? Identifying those you enjoy and those you feel are onerous can help you narrow down your options to careers you will find engaging and rewarding.
- Consider unpaid work and volunteer opportunities. Even though they don't pay, unpaid work and volunteer opportunities can still enrich your life and provide personal satisfaction. Such opportunities should not be overlooked.
- Practice open communication and proper conflict management with colleagues. Negative working environments can be stressful, leading to dissatisfaction on the job. Openly communicating with colleagues and resolving conflicts in a proper, professional way can foster a positive work environment, potentially contributing to greater job satisfaction.

Prioritizing occupational wellness can help people live happier, more fulfilling lives.

# Resolve to read more and reap the benefits

It may be tempting to curl up on the couch and turn on the television to unwind, but research indicates that reading is one of the best workouts for the brain. The World Health Organization says that doctors diagnose nearly 10 million new cases of dementia each year. With so many people understandably concerned about any and all cognitive issues related to aging, the search is continually on to find ways to strengthen the mind's muscle. It may be as simple as picking up a book.

People make New Year's resolutions to improve their lives, and reading more can be a great way to do just that. According to the online health and wellness resource The Healthy (www.thehealthy.com), reading has been associated with language reception in the left temporal cortex of the brain. When this part of the brain processes written material, neurons begin working hard to transmit information. Research conducted by Stanford University indicated that MRI scans of people who are deep into a Jane Austen novel showed an increase in blood flowing to areas of the brain that control both cognitive and executive function.

When the brain is working efficiently, it may be less prone to some of the issues that can cause a decline in memory and brain function. Research published in the journal *Neurology* found frequent brain exercise through reading lowered mental decline by 32 percent.

Of course, the benefits of reading extend beyond the physical. Literary fiction can help people be more empathetic. Getting lost in a book and the characters' stories makes others more relatable. Reading has the potential to help a person understand what people are thinking, of-

fers research published in the journal *Science*.

Picking up a good book also can help a person gain knowledge of new cultures, ideas and history and even improve vocabulary.

Picking up a newspaper or magazine, joining a book club or reading with children are just a few of the many ways to improve the mind through reading.



# 5 weight loss myths debunked

Losing weight is a popular New Year's resolution every year. Roughly 50 percent of people age 20 and older acknowledge they tried to lose weight over the past 12 months, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Successful weight loss requires hard work and patience. Still, many myths abound, and people may think there are quick fixes to shedding a few extra pounds. Debunking some of those myths can help people adopt more realistic weight loss strategies.

**Myth #1:** Avoid carbs to lose weight. A healthy diet is comprised of a mix of foods that include carbohydrates. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans indicate that carbohydrates, such as those found in vegetables, fruits and whole grains, are a foundation of healthy eating. Carbs also provide much-needed fiber.

**Myth #2:** You can target specific fat loss. Exercising and eating healthy can produce overall weight loss and diminish fat concentrations in certain parts of the body, indicates the healthy eating source *Eat This, Not That*. But each body is unique, and where people lose fat varies. Gender is one factor that can affect people's figures. Exercise can tone muscles in key areas to help make a person appear thinner in those regions, but it will not necessarily make fat go away in one place over another.

**Myth #3:** Eating fat makes you fat. Fat is very calorie-dense and common in junk foods, which is why it can get a bad rap. However, as long as calorie intake is within a healthy range — even if some calories are from fat — weight gain will not occur from fat alone, says Healthline. The body needs healthy fats to function properly.

**Myth #4:** Crash diets will make weight fall off. Dramatically cutting calories can lead to nutritional deficiencies and have an adverse effect on weight loss. The body may slow its rate of metabolism to conserve calories, as a crash diet may fool your body into thinking you are starving. It's better to stick to a gradual decrease in calories while still consuming the daily recommended amounts based on your age and other factors.

**Myth #5:** Tons of exercise will make the pounds disappear. Research has repeatedly indicated that exercise can help boost weight loss. However, the real way to shed pounds is primarily linked to diet. According to Shawn M. Talbott, Ph.D., a nutritional biochemist and former director of the University of Utah Nutrition Clinic, weight loss is generally 75 percent diet and 25 percent exercise. People see the biggest short-term results when they eat smart.

If losing weight is your New Year's resolution, get the facts before adopting a weight loss regimen.

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# Quitting vaping may be a life-saving resolution

Electronic cigarettes and other vaping devices were once described as potentially "safer" and "healthier" methods of smoking, even by leading health organizations. Many former tobacco smokers even turned to e-cigarettes as a method to quitting traditional cigarettes. However, recent research into vaping and a rash of mysterious lung illnesses and deaths recently linked to vaping has led many to question if vaping is safe. Those who suspect it's not may be wise to quit.

(diacetyl) used in microwave popcorn linked to scarring of the tiny air sacs in the lungs, resulting in suffocation. Popcorn lung also has been linked to vaping use.

More evidence continues to point to vaping as an unsafe practice. Quitting the habit now can have profound, potentially life-saving effects.

### The illness toll rises

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that, as of September 2019, there were 530 cases of vaping-related lung illnesses. Eight people also died in six states, with the first confirmed death occurring in April. The first known vaping-related illness in Canada was documented on September 18, 2019, when a youth from Ontario was put into intensive care for respiratory illness. While federal and state investigators are largely focusing their investigations on vape cartridges that likely contained tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive component linked to marijuana, as a potential source of these illnesses, all electronic cigarette devices are now under scrutiny.

### A school epidemic

Vaping has quickly become an epidemic in schools. More than 3.6 million American middle and high school students currently use e-cigarettes, according to the latest National Youth Tobacco Study. Teen nicotine vaping rates in 2019 were double those of 2017, the National Institute on Drug Abuse says.

Despite the installation of vaping detectors, and some schools going so far as to remove doors from bathroom stalls, opportunities to vape still abound. Older students may leave campus to vape in their cars during lunch breaks. Laws restricting sales of e-cigarettes to youth in certain states have already been implemented. Lawmakers also plan to ban most flavored e-cigarettes and nicotine pods in an attempt to curtail their use among teenagers.

### Mystery ingredients

Many adults look to e-cigarettes to reduce their dependence on tobacco products. However, Johns Hopkins Medical Center warns e-cigarettes are just as addictive. Also, many e-cigarette users get even more nicotine through extra-strength cartridges or by increasing the voltage to get a greater hit of the addictive substance. The Food and Drug Administration has not approved vaping as a smoking cessation method.

People never can be certain about the ingredients in vaping liquids. And as the popularity of e-cigarettes grows, newer, cheaper, and poorly regulated products are being imported from all over the world to meet the demand. According to the CDC, exposure to such products may cause a range of symptoms, including cough, chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever. There also have been cases of "popcorn lung," which derived its name from a former chemical flavoring



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# How to make your favorite foods healthier



After the whirlwind of the holiday season, the season of resolutions takes over. Many people resolve to live healthier, and they may not have to give up their favorite foods to do so.

Research from the National Institutes of Health suggests American adults between the ages of 18 and 49 gain an average of one to two pounds every year. Grazing and overeating tends to increase when the weather cools down. A 2005 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that, in the fall, people tend to consume more calories, total fat and saturated fat. In the spring, people seem to prefer more carbohydrates. In addition, less powerful sunshine in winter coupled with people bundling up translates into less vitamin D being absorbed by the body. Some researchers believe there is a link between vitamin D deficiency and weight gain as well.

To ensure that certain foods do not sabotage healthy eating plans, people can employ some easy modifications and make healthier versions of the foods they like to eat.

- Choose crunchy foods. Those who are prone to snacking can reach for noisy foods. These include crunchy items like apples, carrots and pretzels. Scientists say that when people listen to what they are chewing — called the “crunch effect” — they eat less of that item.
- Tone down the cream. Delicious dishes like fettuccine alfredo typically

are made with lots of butter and cream. Replace cream sauces with a healthier base made of low-fat milk thickened with flour. Increase the flavor with favorite spices.

- Fry with care. Use healthy oils like olive or coconut sparingly. Many foods that are traditionally fried also can be lightly coated with cooking spray and baked for a crunchy texture.
- Choose sodium-free seasonings. The USCA recommends limiting sodium to less than 1 teaspoon of salt per day. Try options like fresh herbs or lemon juice to add some sodium-free flavor.
- Increase fiber content. Fiber helps one feel fuller longer and can also be helpful for digestion and heart health. Choose the “brown” varieties of rice, pasta and breads.
- Replace meat with leaner forms of protein. Lean chicken, turkey and pork can replace red meats in many recipes. Some traditional meat dishes, such as burgers, also can be modified using vegetables or seafood. Lean meats dry out quickly, so keep foods moist by watching cooking times.
- Stock up on yogurt. Greek and other varieties of yogurt can replace sour cream and mayonnaise in many dishes.

Resolving to eat healthier can be easy by making some simple swaps when preparing your favorite foods.

## Create a **Safe Sleep** Environment for Baby

Did you know that the features of your baby's sleep area can affect his/her risk for **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** and other sleep-related causes of infant death, such as suffocation?

**Reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death by creating a safe sleep environment for your baby.**

How can you make a **safe sleep environment**?



- ▶ Always place baby **on his or her back** to sleep for all sleep times, including naps.



- ▶ **Room share**—keep baby's sleep area in the **same room** next to your sleep area. Your baby should not sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, or on a chair alone, with you, or with anyone else.



- ▶ Use a **firm sleep surface**, such as a mattress in a safety-approved\* crib, bassinet, or portable play area, covered by a fitted sheet.



- ▶ Keep soft objects, toys, pillows, crib bumpers, and loose bedding **out of your baby's sleep area**.



- ▶ **Don't let baby get too hot during sleep.** Dress your baby in no more than one layer more of clothing than an adult would wear to be comfortable. A one-piece sleeper or wearable blanket can be used.

\*Visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website for more information about safety-approved baby sleep areas: <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/cribs/>



Learn more about ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death at

<http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov>

<http://www.scotlandcounty.org/680/Safe-Sleep>



## **Health Department Now Offering Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives**

Scotland County Health Department is pleased to announce we are now offering Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) as a method of birth control. These contraceptives include Intrauterine devices (IUDs) and birth control implants. Examples include Mirena (IUD) and Nexplanon (Implant). LARCs are an effective way of preventing pregnancy for 3-5 years upon insertion, without the need to take a daily pill. "We are excited to be able to offer these methods of birth control to any new or current patient at Scotland County Health Department which will allow us to better serve the people in our community," stated Kristen Patterson, Health Director.

For more information about Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives, to determine eligibility, or to make an appointment, please call the Scotland County Health Department at 910-277-2440 or 910-277-2470 ext. 4466.

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