

# Healthy Lifestyles

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## Don't Let the Flu Scare You

### There's a Simple Way to Keep the Flu Away

You can avoid the flu this season by taking one simple step: Get a flu shot.

Unfortunately, some people think that getting a flu immunization is too much trouble or costs too much. Or they are sure that a flu immunization will make them sick or make them more likely to catch the flu or even colds.

Seasonal influenza — the flu — is caused by one of several strains of influenza viruses (type A or B) that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu makes life miserable for a week or two for many people — and is deadly for some. Flu season can begin as early as October and peak anywhere from late December to early April, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

#### Immunization facts

Your best defense against the flu is to get immunized. Depending on your age, you can do that in one of two ways:

- With a flu shot, given with a needle. This form of the vaccine contains killed virus and is approved for all people older than six months of age.
- With a nasal-spray vaccine. This form contains live, weakened flu viruses that can't cause the flu. This form is approved for healthy people ages two to 49 years. Exceptions are those who are pregnant or have diabetes, a weakened immune system, heart problems, or chronic respiratory disorders like asthma. Check with your health care provider to see if the nasal-spray vaccine is right for you.

A flu immunization is most important for children six months to 59 months and adults ages 50 and older. It is also important for anyone with a chronic disease, anyone who lives in a nursing home or other long-term care site, health care workers, and people who are often in contact with elderly adults or the chronically ill. The CDC says children between six months and eight years who were never immunized or received only one dose of vaccine in the previous year should get

two full doses of vaccine, one month apart.

Health care providers also suggest flu shots for women who plan to be pregnant during flu season. The CDC says flu shots are OK for breastfeeding mothers.

Even if you don't fall into one of the above groups, you can still get the vaccine if you want to avoid the flu.

#### Talk with your health care provider first

Some people shouldn't be immunized for the flu before talking with their health care provider, the CDC says. These are reasons to talk with your health care provider:

- You have a severe allergy — like an anaphylactic reaction — to chicken eggs.
- You had previously developed Guillian-Barré syndrome in the six weeks after getting a flu shot.

- You currently have an illness with a fever. Wait until symptoms improve before getting the vaccine.
- Children younger than six months of age should not be immunized against the flu. Flu vaccines haven't been approved for that age group.

#### Other prevention steps

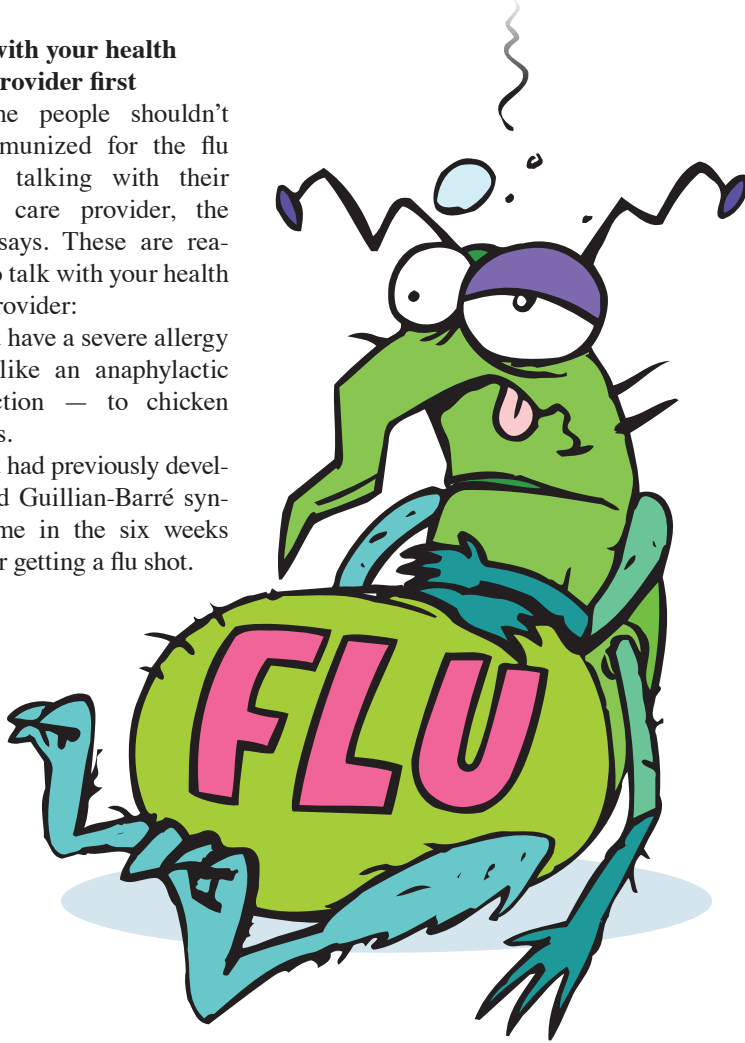
Flu viruses are spread by contact with droplets sneezed or coughed from an infected person. Inhaling the droplets is the most common route to getting the flu. Touching objects on which droplets have landed also infects many people. You can spread the virus to others before you feel sick yourself. The CDC says you are contagious a day before symptoms begin and up to five days afterward.

You can protect your-

self against the flu by doing simple things like washing your hands before eating and not putting your hands near your face or in your mouth. You don't need special cleansers when washing your hands. Washing for at least 20 seconds with ordinary soap works fine. If someone in your family has the flu, you can keep surfac-

vaccine is made from pieces of dead flu virus cells. The nasal spray contains live viruses that have been damaged so they can't cause a major infection.

When you are injected with the flu vaccine, your body reacts as if it has been infected with the actual living virus and makes antibodies that provide immu-



es clean of the virus by wiping them with a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water.

The other effective means of flu prevention is humidity. The flu bug exists in higher quantities in dry nasal and oral passages, which is one reason why flu epidemics occur in dry winter months. Raise the humidity in your workplace and at home to keep your nasal passages and mouth moist. Your body will then be better able to flush out the flu bug.

#### Rooting out rumors

Don't believe the rumor that a flu shot can give you even a mild case of influenza. It's impossible. Neither form of the vaccine — by injection or nasal spray — contains a form of the flu virus that can give you the flu. The injected form of the

nity against the real virus. These antibodies remain at high levels for only six months to nine months. These disappearing antibody levels are one reason why you need to be revaccinated each year.

The main reason you should be revaccinated yearly is that the flu virus is constantly changing and evolving into new strains. Each year the CDC tries to guess which flu strain will be predominant. The CDC works with vaccine manufacturers to make the specific vaccine that will fight the predicted strain.

If you are concerned about the cost of a flu immunization, check with your local health department for locations in your area where free flu shots are given.

## Routine Vaccination Recommendations for Adults, Adolescents and Children

Many basic vaccinations are often given in combination to reduce the number of injections. The following diseases can be prevented by following the CDC guidelines for immunization:

- **Diphtheria.** This is a serious disease caused by a bacterial toxin (poison). It causes severe breathing problems and can be deadly.
- **Haemophilus influenzae type B.** A bacterial infection that leads to conditions, such as meningitis, pneumonia and epiglottitis.
- **Hepatitis A.** A viral disease of the liver. It spreads from person to person when water, food, or other items contaminated with feces are ingested. Symptoms may include gastrointestinal upset, fatigue, and yellowing of the skin. However, some people, particularly younger children, may have no symptoms.
- **Hepatitis B.** This type of hepatitis is spread through blood and body fluids. Symptoms may include fever, fatigue, gastrointestinal symptoms, joint pain, and yellowing of the skin and eyes that can last from weeks to months. Hepatitis B is more severe because unlike hepatitis A, hepatitis B can cause chronic hepatitis that may lead to the development of cirrhosis and liver cancer.
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV).** A very common sexually transmitted disease that can cause genital warts (condylomas). It can lead to cervical and other less common, but serious, cancers.
- **Influenza (flu).** This is a highly contagious disease that affects your lungs. It is caused by various strains of influenza viruses. Flu causes mild to severe illness and can be deadly in some cases.
- **Measles (Rubeola).** Measles is a highly contagious infection. It causes fever, cough, runny nose, and a rash all over the body.
- **Meningococcal meningitis.** A severe bacterial infection of the membranes that cover the

brain and spinal cord. It is caused by a bacterial infection. Symptoms can include fever, headache, a stiff neck, nausea, and altered mental status.

- **Mumps.** Mumps is a virus that causes a painful infection in the salivary or parotid glands, and sometimes other areas of the body.
- **Pertussis (whooping cough).** A highly contagious respiratory disease. It causes severe and persistent high-pitched coughing spasms.
- **Pneumococcal pneumonia.** A serious lung infection caused by the bacteria called Streptococcus pneumoniae.
- **Polio.** A highly infectious viral disease that invades the nervous system. Symptoms may include a flu-like illness and stiffness in the neck and back with pain in the limbs. In the worst case, the infection can result in permanent paralysis of the limbs, typically the legs.
- **Rotavirus.** A highly contagious virus that is the leading cause of severe diarrhea among children.
- **Rubella (German measles).** This is a contagious disease caused by a virus. Symptoms include a rash and fever.
- **Tetanus (lockjaw).** A bacterial disease of the nervous system caused by Clostridium tetani. Symptoms include painful contractions of the muscles that can progress to seizure-like activity and nervous system disorders.
- **Varicella (chickenpox).** A contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus and marked by skin eruptions. It is most common in children.
- **Zoster (shingles).** A painful skin rash with blisters caused by the varicella zoster virus. It is the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a chickenpox infection, the virus can remain in nerve cells and reappear years later in the form of shingles.

**The main reason you should be vaccinated yearly is that the flu virus is constantly changing and evolving into new strains.**



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# Get Peninsula's Holiday Survival Guide in the Nick o' Time

If the holidays are stressing you out, don't wait any longer to download your complimentary copy of Peninsula's Holiday Survival Guide.

The guide is a free community service of Peninsula, a Division of Parkwest Medical Center. It includes experts' advice on common holiday stressors such as managing money, juggling multiple obligations and coping with loneliness.

"Holidays can trigger stress in nearly everyone," said Parkwest CAO Rick Lassiter. "However, most of that stress is self-induced and we can avoid it."

The guide includes information on how to get through common stressful situations such as making travel plans, facing difficult relationships, managing anger and coping with illness and grief. The guide also discusses why the holidays are so tempting for people

with addictive behavior problems such as alcohol or drug dependency.

Additionally, there are printable tip pages for shopping smarter, staying connected with your children, getting through grief and other topics. The guide also offers advice for giv-

ing guilt-free gifts and maintaining – not gaining – weight over the holiday season.

Visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) to download your free copy today.



# Have a Plan and Set Boundaries

## Make a List and Check it Twice

Start thinking about the holidays early. Think about the current state of your life: your finances, your health, and any other obligations you must meet during the time between Thanksgiving and New Year's. These are non-negotiable.

Then sit down with a calendar and fill in all the dates you already know are booked. You'll be surprised how much it helps to actually see your commitments written out. Keep the calendar in a place the entire family can access, such as the refrigerator door.

### NOW YOU'RE READY TO DEVELOP A HOLIDAY PLAN:

**Be realistic.** Accept that your holidays will not resemble a Currier & Ives

greeting card or a Norman Rockwell painting – and that's OK. Your holiday can be anything you want it to be, so give yourself permission to do what you want, not what you think is expected of you.

**Make a list – really.** Making lists can help you prioritize what needs to be done, what can wait and what can be skipped if need be. Do things ahead of time if you can, and don't sweat the small stuff. People eat grocery store cookies just as easily as homemade cookies.

**Make a budget and stick to it.** The only thing worse than Aunt Mabel's fruitcake is a pile of credit card bills when the holidays are over. Gifts don't need to be expensive, and going into unnecessary debt will be a

burden in the New Year.

**Delegate.** Surprise! You're only human and you shouldn't have to do everything yourself. Enlist the help of family and friends to do cooking, cleaning, decorating and even gift wrapping!

**Take care of YOU.** While preparing for the holidays, don't forget to care for yourself. Eat well, sleep plenty, exercise and take a little time for yourself each day. A hot bath, mug of cocoa or a good book can do wonders for your mental health.

**Learn to say NO.** Saying no isn't necessarily selfish. When you say no to a new commitment, you're honoring your existing obligations and ensuring that you'll be able to devote quality time to them.



## CAN YOU PASS THE HOLIDAY STRESS TEST?

### Five signs you may be stressed:

- ☹ You're irritable.
- ☹ You're losing sleep.
- ☹ You're losing or gaining weight.
- ☹ You feel tense, with muscle aches or headaches.
- ☹ You feel overwhelmed.

For more information and additional self-assessments, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) and click on the Self-Assessment Tools link or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800 for assistance in dealing with stress.

# Blue Christmas

## Enjoying the Holidays Despite Sadness, Loss or Grief

Just because we expect this time of year to be filled with an abundance of joy and good cheer, the season doesn't automatically bring us happy holidays – and it certainly doesn't banish reasons for feeling lonely or sad. In fact, it may increase your likeliness of feeling emotional and negative.

Death, divorce or other separation can cause a deep and acute sense of loss during the holidays. Relationships, finances and the physical exertion of the season can all play havoc with your life. Learn how to anticipate and circumvent the pitfalls of the holiday blues:

- **Reach out.** Spend time with your significant other or a close friend who accepts you as you are. Look for opportunities to socialize and enjoy the company of others.
- **Let the past stay in the past.** Don't let perceived past failures get you down. Leave the

past where it is and, for that matter, don't worry about the future. Live in the present, especially if thoughts of the past or future cause you sadness, guilt or anxiety.

- **Be who you are.** Sometimes when we are with family we tend to fall into preconceived roles. We may be the baby of the family or the fat girl. Keep a sense of who you really are. Don't be brought down by negative comments or the opinions of others, no matter how close they are to you.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat healthy, get plenty of rest, don't drink too much and don't overindulge on sweets and goodies.

- **Lighten your heart.** A light holiday book, movie or live performance can lift your spirits and give you a break from your to-do list or other holiday stressors.

- **Make time to experience the spirit of the season.** Religious services and rituals often bring a sense of peace and purpose to an otherwise frantic time of year.

erwise frantic time of year.

- **Help others.** Sometimes a good response to the blues is to move from self-focused to other-focused. Contribute to a meaningful charity or reach out to help others in a tangible way. Sometimes the gift of your time is as important – or more important – than a gift of money.

During winter months some individuals experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD), brought on by decreased exposure to sunlight. Others experience holiday blues that last a few days. But sometimes our feelings go beyond the blues or SAD, and are se-

rious signs of depression. If you or a loved one have holiday blues that seem to be lingering, watch for the following signs:


- Constant sadness or irritability
- Lethargy
- Loss of interest in pleasures once enjoyed
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Feelings of guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness
- Changes in weight, appetite or sleeping habits
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Thoughts of suicide or death

If you are aware of any of the above signs or symptoms, seek professional help. A good first step: visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) for information or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.



**The holidays may actually increase your likeliness of feeling emotional and negative.**

Download your FREE copy of the  
**2015 PENINSULA'S HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE**  
 at [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org)



Peninsula Behavioral Health  
 A Division of Parkwest Medical Center  
 Covenant Health

# When Sadness is Seasonal

## What is seasonal affective disorder?

Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a mood disorder characterized by depression related to a certain season of the year – especially winter. However, SAD is often not described as a separate mood disorder but as a “specifier,” referring to the seasonal pattern of major depressive episodes that can occur within major depression and manic depression.

SAD is a clinical diagnosis accepted in the medical community. Norman E. Rosenthal, MD is the researcher credited with discovering SAD.

## Who is affected by SAD?

Onset usually occurs during adulthood (with the average onset occurring at approximately age 23), and is more likely to affect women than men. According to the National Mental Health Disorders Association, approximately 10 to 20 percent of the population suffers from mild winter SAD, and nearly five percent suffer from a more severe form of the disorder.

## What are the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder?

Two seasonal patterns of symptoms have been identified with SAD: a fall-onset type, also called

“winter depression,” in which major depressive episodes begin in the late fall to early winter months and remit during the summer months, and a spring-onset type, also called “summer depression,” in which the severe depressive episode begins in late spring to early summer. The following are the most common symptoms of SAD. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- Increased sleep and daytime drowsiness
  - Irritability
  - Fatigue, or low energy level
  - Decreased sex drive
  - Diminished concentration
  - Difficulty thinking clearly
  - Increased appetite, especially for sweets and carbohydrates, causing weight gain
- The symptoms of SAD may resemble other psychiatric conditions. Always

see your health care provider for a diagnosis.

## What causes SAD?

Decreased sunlight is thought to be part of the cause of SAD, and is under clinical investigation.

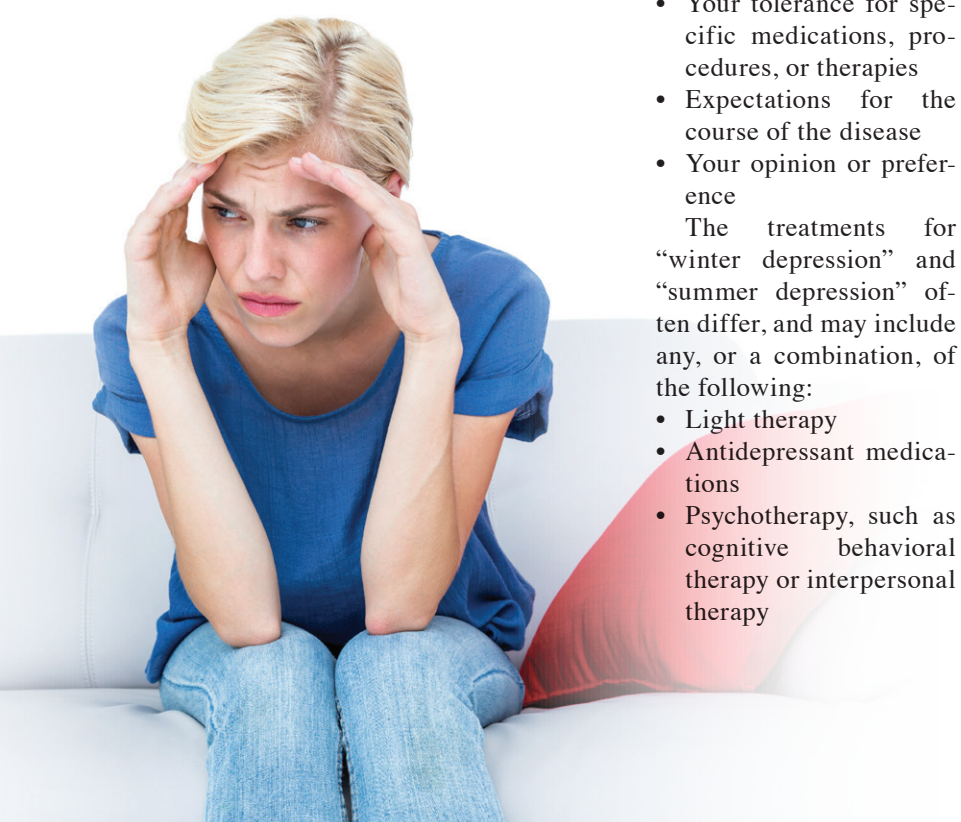
## Treatment for seasonal affective disorder

Specific treatment for SAD will be determined by your health care provider based on:

- Your age, overall health, and medical history
- Extent of the disease
- Your tolerance for specific medications, procedures, or therapies
- Expectations for the course of the disease
- Your opinion or preference

The treatments for “winter depression” and “summer depression” often differ, and may include any, or a combination, of the following:

- Light therapy
- Antidepressant medications
- Psychotherapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy or interpersonal therapy



## Easy, Secure Access to Your Hospital Visit Summary

When you choose a Covenant Health facility, you are now able to access a summary of your hospital visit online within 36 hours after you are discharged. With this summary, you'll be able to view and download information about your hospital visit. Covenant Health has partnered with a company called Relay Health to provide this secure and convenient online service.

How you access your personal health record is extremely important. Use caution when accessing your personal health record. Use devices (PCs, iPads, phones, etc.) that you trust. Public internet Wi-Fi locations may not be secure. Protect the security of your password - we recommend that you do not share your password with anyone.

## How to Access Your Hospital Visit Summary

### If you provided an email address at registration,

you will receive an email message from Relay Health with instructions for setting up your User ID and password, and for logging in to view your Hospital Visit Summary.

**If you did not provide an email address during your hospital stay,** but would like to access your Hospital Visit Summary for the first time, follow these steps:

1. Enter <https://app.relayhealth.com> in your web browser.
2. Click the “Register Now” link.

- Select “Register as a Patient.”
- Complete the registration form and click “Next.”

3. Once registration is complete, click on the “Your Providers” link.

- Click “Add a Doctor for <your name>.”
- Enter the hospital name from the list provided in the “Doctors Last Name” box
- Enter Your Zip Code and click “Search.”
- Click the “Select This Practice” link next to the hospital name you selected.

4. Click “Exit Setup.”

5. Click “Sign Out.”

**If you are a returning user** and want to access the most recent Hospital Visit Summary, follow these steps:

1. Enter <https://app.relayhealth.com> in your web browser.
2. Login with your User ID and password. Click on the tab titled “Health Records” to see your information.

*Note: Your Hospital Visit Summary provides a limited portion of your medical information. There may be times when electronic access to your Visit Summary is temporarily unavailable because of routine maintenance of the Relay Health web site.*

**For questions or assistance with your Hospital Visit Summary, please contact Relay Health at 1-866-RelayMe (735-2963).**

# The Health Benefits of a Gluten-Free Diet

Gluten-free foods seem to be everywhere these days. Restaurants and cafes regularly feature gluten-free dishes and pastries. Supermarkets offer gluten-free bread, rolls, and crackers.

Many people are reducing or eliminating their dietary intake of gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and some other grains. But only those who have celiac disease need to completely stop eating gluten. Celiac disease is a condition in which the immune system is abnormally sensitive to gluten. Others who have a gluten sensitivity may simply feel better if they eat much less of it.

## How to tell if gluten is affecting your digestive tract

In people with celiac disease, gluten can damage the digestive tract. In particular, it harms the small intestine's villi. Villi are small, fingerlike projections that soak up nutrients from food. If the villi are damaged, the body cannot soak up enough nutrients. You may begin to feel stomach pain, indigestion, bloating, and other unpleasant symptoms. Left untreated, the disease can cause conditions that are more serious.

Health care providers diagnose the need for a gluten-free diet based partly on blood test results and on symptoms that keep coming back. These symptoms can include:

- Joint pain and inflammation
- Digestive problems, including stomach pain and bloating
- Indigestion and acid reflux
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Anxiety, mood swings, or depression

- Vitamin deficiencies
- Skin rashes and itching
- Infertility
- Recurring miscarriages
- Migraines
- Canker sores
- Tingling in the hands and feet

## Treating gluten troubles with diet

For anyone with celiac disease, eating gluten can damage the small intestine and other tissues and organs. This can make it hard for the body to soak up nutrients. Some people without celiac disease also have trouble tolerating gluten or are sensitive to it.

Diet is the main way to treat gluten intolerance or gluten sensitivity. A big part of a gluten-free diet is to avoid foods made with wheat, rye, or barley. This means most regular breads, pizza, cereals, pastas, cakes, and cookies. Also, many processed foods contain hidden gluten. The most common culprits are soy sauce, gravies, canned soups, nutritional bars, barley malt, and veggie burgers.

But even products like lipstick and medications can contain gluten. If you have celiac disease, you'll need to become an expert at reading food and product labels. Your health provider or a gluten-free support group can help you.

Be careful when replacing gluten foods with foods that are gluten-free. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) says that packaged gluten-free foods aren't necessarily better or healthier. In fact, some gluten-free foods are higher in fat, sugar, and total calories than foods with gluten. As with any diet, the variety of nutritious foods in your gluten-free diet will determine how healthy it is.

## Protecting your health by going gluten-free

If you are living with a gluten sensitivity or intolerance, you'll need to avoid foods and products containing gluten. At the same time, you'll need to work with your health care providers to make sure that you're getting enough vitamins and minerals. Your health care provider can let you know if you need to take a supplement to replace any missing nutrients. Be aware that some supplements are made with ingredients that contain gluten, so be sure to choose supplements carefully. The NIH provides a list of foods and other products containing gluten.

After you start on your gluten-free diet, your small intestine will start to repair the damage to its villi. After a while, your

body will begin soaking up food normally again. Your digestive symptoms will begin to disappear. You also should start to feel much better overall.

If you don't notice enough improvement, it's usually because small amounts of gluten remain in your diet. Also, other conditions can interfere with a gluten-free diet. These include irritable bowel syndrome, lactose intolerance, and bacterial overgrowth in the intestine. Check in with your health care provider regularly to check on your condition. Call your health care provider right away if you continue to have symptoms or side effects once you're on a gluten-free diet.





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