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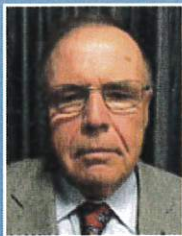


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Want to redeem \$200.00 in gift cards of your choice? All you have to do is walk 294,000 steps over six weeks (roughly 7,000 steps a day). This year you will receive a brand-new Fitbit Versa 3 if you register for the Steps Challenge between Monday April 26th, 2021 and Sunday May 16th, 2021 and are an eligible member or dependent (18 years or older). The challenge will begin on Monday May 10th, 2021 and conclude on Monday June 21st, 2021. To register, log on to www.ahealthyme.com/login. Once registered, you will receive a Fitbit Versa 3, the motivational health & fitness smartwatch!

If you have a disability and are unable to complete the challenge, a reasonable accommodation will be made available for you

COVID-19 VACCINE FACTS & MYTHS

GET OUTSIDE THIS SPRING!

KRISPIE PEEP TREATS

GARDENING TIPS AND TRICKS

FIND ALL THESE ARTICLES
& MORE IN THIS MONTH'S
NEWSLETTER!

QUOTE CORNER:

"Spring: A lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be."

COMPARING THE COVID-19 JOHNSON & JOHNSON, MODERNA AND PFIZER VACCINES

In an ideal world, during a global pandemic a vaccine could be delivered in a single shot so supplies would be able to reach many people. The vaccine would trigger no side effects more severe than a sore arm and it would be easy to ship and store. Unfortunately, that is not our reality but we are thankful to have not one or two but three vaccines that have proven to be effective. Although it is demonstrating to be more difficult than many had hoped to become vaccinated, with time and patience everyone that wishes to get vaccinated should be able to do so relatively soon.

Vaccine Types – The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are made using messenger RNA or mRNA, a technology that is able to deliver a genetic code to cells – a recipe to make the surface protein (also known as a spike protein) on the SARS-2 virus. The proteins made with the mRNA instructions activate the immune system and teaches the immune system to recognize the spike protein as foreign and in turn develop antibodies and other immunity weapons to fight it.

The Johnson and Johnson (J&J) vaccine uses a different approach to instruct human cells to make the SARS-2 spike protein, which then triggers an immune response. This is known as a viral vectored vaccine. A harmless adenovirus from a large family of viruses (some of which cause common colds) has been engineered to carry the spike protein. Once the adenovirus enters the cells, they use the code to make spike proteins.

Vaccine Efficiency - The Pfizer vaccine has shown 95% efficiency at preventing a symptomatic Covid infection after receiving two doses.

The Moderna vaccine was 94.1% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 after the second dose was received.

Comparing the efficiency of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to the J&J vaccine is like comparing apples and oranges. This is because of the differences in the designs of the Phase 3 clinical tests. The trials were testing for different outcomes. Pfizer and Moderna tested for any symptomatic Covid infection. In contrast, Johnson & Johnson attempted to determine whether one dose of its vaccine protected against moderate to severe Covid illness which was defined by a positive Covid test and at least one symptom starting at day 14 or 28 days after the single shot. The one shot J&J vaccine was shown to be 66% effective against moderate to severe Covid infections overall from 28 days after vaccination. The vaccine showed to be 85% effective from severe cases of Covid.

Side Effects - The most common side effects of these vaccines are injection site pain, fatigue, headache, muscle and joint pain. Some participants in the clinical trials also reported a fever. Side effects were seen more frequently after the second dose of the vaccine. Younger adults who have healthier and stronger immune systems, reported more side effects than those of older adults.

Let's get one thing clear! Side effects are your immune systems kicking into gear. These side effects do not mean that the vaccines are unsafe. Currently, there are no serious long-term side effects associated with receiving these vaccines, but this will certainly be closely monitored as their use expands. There have been more reports of severe allergic reactions to the mRNA vaccines. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines appear (on rare occasions) to trigger anaphylaxis which is a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction. If people do develop anaphylaxis they are treated with epinephrine (the drug in EpiPens) and may need to be hospitalized to ensure their airway remains open. The CDC says those who are being vaccinated should be monitored for 15 minutes after getting the shot and if they have a history of severe allergic reactions should be monitored for 30 minutes. It will take more monitoring and data to see just how often that reaction occurs. With the current data the CDC suggests that anaphylaxis occurs at a rate of 2.1 cases per million doses of the Moderna vaccine and 6.2 cases per million of the Pfizer vaccine. Most people who do develop anaphylaxis have a history of severe allergies and some have even had a history of anaphylaxis in the past. So far the J&J vaccine has shown no anaphylactic reactions.

Safety for pregnant and breast-feeding women -

None of the vaccines have been tested in these two groups.

Moderna has completed animal studies that the FDA demanded of manufacturers. These studies look to see if the vaccines might harm the pregnancy or developing fetus. Moderna said they saw no such signs.

Pfizer only has interim data but they also saw no such signs that were concerning either.

The recommendation by the CDC states that until those studies are conducted the choice of whether you get vaccinated if you are pregnant or breastfeeding is entirely up to the individual, their situation and the suggestion of their PCP or OBGYN.

The Johnson and Johnson vaccine hasn't been through the regulatory process yet so it is far too early to say what the FDA & CDC will recommend.

Let's Keep Your Record Straight...

Any changes in status need record updating as soon as possible!

This includes: marriage, a new baby, dependent social security numbers, change of beneficiary, new e-mail, addresses and/or phone numbers, divorce, or updating/changing your primary care provider with Blue Cross or Fallon to name a few.

When you keep up-to-date, your service is not interrupted!





GETTING OUTSIDE THIS SPRING AND WHAT YOU SHOULD DO WHEN YOU'RE THERE

See Nature: Spring is the best time to witness the ever-changing nature. You will get to witness the miracle of re-growth and new life that happens every spring.

Spend Time with Family: You've been cooped up and quarantined together, get outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine together. Take a walk, go on a hike, ride your bikes. There are lots of outdoor activities to experience together.

Vitamin D: Most people have a hard time getting enough Vitamin D during the cold and darker winter months. When a sunny spring day comes your way, step outside to increase your body's Vitamin D levels and improve your body's ability for strong bone health, cell growth, inflammation reduction and more.

Outdoor Spring Activities

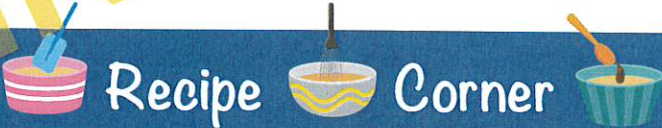
- **Get Healthier:** The more time you spend outdoors, the more likely you are to move! Outdoor activities naturally lend themselves to exercise, which boosts your health.
- **Reduce Stress:** Spending time outside has also been shown to reduce stress
- **Fun Outdoor Spring Activities:**
 - Hiking
 - Bike riding
 - Gardening
 - Jogging
 - Golfing

MEDICAL VISITS YOU SHOULD NOT MISS EVEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Because of COVID-19, about 40% of adults are cancelling or postponing their regular medical appointments according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). For diseases like breast and colon cancers which rely on regular screenings, experts say delaying those appointments could result in an additional 10,000 deaths.

Initially, many health care providers recommended delaying routine appointments because personal protective equipment was in short supply, but now that we are in a better place and have a better hold on the pandemic delaying these appointments should not occur. Unfortunately, there may still a backlog of those who had an appointment scheduled and had to push it off. For healthy people, delaying a routine screening might be okay but for someone who previously had a cancer diagnosis or other red flags it is important to make it to a screening. Some doctors are not aware of how big the backlog is so patients should contact their physicians directly to discuss their situation. Talking to your physician and speaking about your history, medical conditions or other complaints is the only way at this time to expedite the appointment.

Many medical facilities have strict COVID-19 protocols that they follow to keep patients safe (temperature checks, questionnaires and vigorous cleanings). A recent study found that only 31% of U.S. consumers feel comfortable making an in-person visit to the doctor, despite a majority of these patients viewing their doctor as a trust worthy source. Additionally, the survey found that 72% of these patients have dramatically changed the way they use traditional healthcare services.



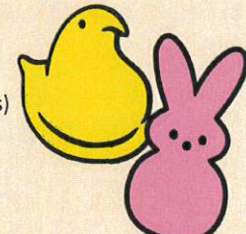
Recipe Corner

Layered Peep Krispie Treats

Super easy to make and everyone will be impressed with just how cute they are!

Ingredients:

- (4) 3 oz. package of peeps (various colors)
- 4 Tbsp. Butter
- 6 Cups Rice Krispies



Directions:

1. Use separate microwavable bowls for each layer of these treats. You want the dish to be tall because the peeps will expand quite a bit in the microwave and they may spill over shorter sides.
2. Melt a 3 oz. package of peeps with a tablespoon of butter for 45 seconds in the microwave. Pause for a moment and then stir them.
3. Add a cup and a half of Rice Krispies and combine until the cereal is completely coated with colorful sticky peeps. Press into a loaf pan with foil, then repeat the process with the rest of your colors.
4. Allow the layered Rice Krispies to cook completely at room temperature. Then, remove from the pan and slice and serve or wrap up as individual treats!

**PRO-TIP!! Keep a can of non-stick cooking spray nearby when making marshmallow treats. Spray spatula for stirring and your fingers when pressing down the treats.

Recipe by Yellow Bliss Road

Individuals should not skip their regular preventative care treatments. If a person feels uncomfortable attending a visit in person, they could always opt for a telehealth visit but that would only work if no additional testing or bloodwork needed to be done.

Even during the pandemic, here are seven health care priorities you should not skip:

- **Non-COVID Medical Emergencies** – Nationally, emergency room visits are down. This is very concerning to many health professionals because they know that heart-attacks and other health conditions do not just hit pause due to a global pandemic. If you or are loved one are experiencing any emergency symptoms such as difficulty breathing, prolonged loss of consciousness, chest pain and heaviness or severe bleeding call 911 or go to your closest emergency room immediately.
- **Chronic Conditions** - During the 2002-2004 SARS outbreak it was revealed that hospitalizations for Diabetes plummeted, then dramatically increased afterwards. Those who have chronic illnesses are already at higher risk for contracting COVID-19 and fear from exposure may keep them from their regular routine care. It is extremely important to take care of yourself during this time. Most offices are now seeing patients on appointment only basis or through telehealth visits. Of course, if you do need to attend your appointment in person practice social distancing, wear a mask, sanitize and go to your appointment alone if you are able to.
- **Routine Vaccinations** - We now have a COVID-19 vaccine but it is still important to take other vaccines. Flu, shingles, measles and all routine vaccinations for children that are needed at their well visits. These visits should be a top priority.
- **Prenatal Care** - For regular prenatal appointments, some pre-natal visits may be less necessary. But expectant Moms should not skip certain check-ups. Always consult with your doctor to discuss the best course of action for you and your situation.
- **Annual Physicals** - Yearly check-ups are another example of appointments that should not be skipped but can often be conducted through telemedicine. This type of appointment can help screen for health issues before they arise.
- **Pharmacy Visits** - There may be a fear that surrounds going to the doctors office in person but the same fear does not seem to come about when it comes to visiting a pharmacy. A recent study found that almost 50% of respondents felt comfortable visiting a pharmacy to pick-up prescriptions. If people don't feel comfortable physically going into the pharmacy there are other options such as drive-up or mail-order services.
- **Mental Health Screening & Counseling** - Isolation from social distancing is difficult for many and may cause some of us to feel more anxious, depressed or irritable. If you are feeling this way you are certainly not alone and help is available. Some providers offer resources for free or at low cost, as well as appointments conducted from your own home.

Some appointments cannot and should not be avoided. Visiting your doctor may be safer than avoiding care. It is important to talk to your primary care physician and discuss any concerns you may have. They will analyze whether an in-person or telehealth appointment would be the best option for you at this time.

RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HOW TO HELP

Clinicians are offering tips for loved ones as rates of relapses and overdoses rise.

Amid the pandemic rates of addiction and overdoses are rising. Recognizing signs and seeking help for substance abuse can help stem a dangerous trend. The pandemic has put enormous stress on people and deprived many of their autonomy, human connections and the routines that have been developed to sustain sobriety.

Last summer the CDC found in a survey that 40% of U.S. adults were struggling with mental health or substance use and 13% said that they started or increased substance abuse. More than forty states have reported increases in opioid-related deaths during the pandemic according to the American Medical Association. Unfortunately, the pandemic has only deepened the long running crisis. Between the years of 2000 and 2018, more than 750,00 people in the United States died from drug overdoses and there are currently an estimated 21 million American that admit to having at least one addiction. Some 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotic Anonymous are now entirely online, making them more accessible to some but less accessible to others. People that need help may not have access to the internet or do not feel comfortable connecting with people online.

Friends and family are able to help those who are struggling by recognizing that there is a problem. Some signs of addiction may include but are not limited to:

- Being unable to manage responsibilities at work, home or school because of drug or alcohol abuse
- Continuing to use drugs or alcohol even when it is known to cause problems in relationships
- Giving up important social, recreational or work-related activities because of drug or alcohol use
- Taking a prescription drug in larger amounts or for longer than intended
- Feeling unable to cut down or stop using a drug
- Spending a lot of time getting, using or recovering from the drug
- Using drugs or alcohol again and again even when it worsens a physical or mental problem
- Developing withdrawal symptoms like nausea, sweating, irritability or nervousness

Spotting a relapse or new addiction may be more difficult during the pandemic when friends and families are often separated and able to connect only by phone or online. Signs of trouble may appear subtly and lead to small changes in behavior. It might be things like a person acting more isolated, less responsive, or someone suddenly asking for money. For those checking in how people who have battled addiction in the past, the key is to recognize the clues from prior behavior. It is a chronically relapsing condition.



10 HEALTH FOOD SUBSTITUTES FOR COMMON FOODS

Are you ready to add more plant-based foods to your diet? Whether you are baking or just snacking try incorporating these changes to clean up your diet and make the appropriate substitutions.



Meat Substitutes:

- **Tempeh** – Tempeh is a soy-based product that is traditionally made with soybeans but could also be made with any type of beans. These beans could include black beans, white beans, chickpeas or black-eyed peas. Some tempeh also includes grains like brown rice, barley, millet or seeds. Tempeh has a chunkier texture and works well in chilis and pastas in place of ground beef. Tempeh is a good source of protein, manganese, iron and other trace materials. You can find it sold in various or plain flavors.
- **Tofu** – Tofu is a soybean product made from the curds of soymilk. The curds are pressed into blocks and made into different textures. These textures include soft, firm and extra-firm. Tofu is high in protein as well as calcium and takes on whatever flavor you put it in. You can press it to make a more meat-like product and you can season it to use in anything from salad, to sandwiches to main dishes.
- **Portobello Mushrooms** – These mushrooms can add a hearty and earthy flavor to many meatless dishes. The substantial mushroom can be sliced or used whole as a meat stand-in for sandwiches or you can add them to pasta or rice dishes. Portobello mushrooms are rich in riboflavin, niacin and B vitamins.

Butter Substitutes:

- **Avocado** – If you're looking for a good fat replacement avocado is a great option. Although it does not contain as much fat as dairy butter it has zero cholesterol, has less calories and can be used in a one-to-one ratio in your baked goods (1 cup of avocado is equivalent to 1 cup of butter). Avocado maintains a moist, rich texture.
- **Apple Sauce** – For baking, especially cakes, apple sauce is a great substitute for butter. It creates a moist and delicious dessert with way fewer calories than butter. Applesauce can also be used in a one-to-one ratio.
- **Vegan Butter** – Vegan butter can be spread just like dairy butter as it is made from mixing fats from cocoa butter, olive oil or even cashews. The one draw back of vegan butter is that it does not melt as well as a dairy-based butter or margarine.

Cheese Substitutes:

- **Cashews** – Cashews have a butter like quality so when it is combined with vinegar, nutritional yeast, lemon juice and seasonings it provides a powerful dose of vitamin B but it also makes for a delicious cheese like spread.
- **Potato Provolone** – This cheese uses a potato starch base so this is perfect to slice for grilled cheese or other sandwiches where you want a delicious melt.
- **Aquafaba Mozzarella** – Aquafaba is the liquid form of a can of chickpeas that normally, one would pour down the drain. This works as a great binding agent, along with nutritional yeast, lemon juice and salt to create your own vegan mozzarella.

Egg Substitutes:

- **Silken Tofu** – Tofu is an easy, protein-packed replacement for eggs in baking as long as your recipe calls for baking powder and baking soda so they leaven properly and you are making a cake or dessert. Replace the egg with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup silken tofu, and be sure to whip it up before mixing the tofu into the batter.
- **Arrow Root** – Part of what eggs do in baking is to bind ingredients together. For an alternative, mix 2 tablespoons of arrowroot with 3 tablespoons of water.
- **Chickpea Flour** – This pea-based flour creates a great scrambled egg substitute when combined with nutritional yeast and kalamansi (a special salt that imparts an egg-like flavor). Cook it up with some hearty vegetables or even on its own and you will have a great breakfast.
- **Applesauce** – Substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of applesauce for one egg in baked goods. It helps to bind and add moisture but doesn't add any cholesterol!



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SIMPLE GARDENING TIPS & TRICKS

Spring is almost here which means it will be time to get back in your garden and get back to work soon!

1. Are your clay pots looking a bit salty? Combine equal parts white vinegar, rubbing alcohol and water in a spray bottle. Apply the mixture to the pot and scrub with a plastic brush. Let the pot dry completely before you plant anything else in it.
2. If dirt under your fingernails bothers you while gardening, before you begin, draw your fingernails across a bar of soap. Doing this will seal the undersides of your nails so dirt cannot collect beneath them. After you are done in the garden, use a nailbrush to remove the soap and your nails will be sparkling clean!
3. Does the line on your string trimmer often jam or break? Treat with a spray vegetable oil before installing it in the trimmer.
4. Have twine handy for when you need it. Stick a ball of twine in a small pot, pull the end of the twine through the drainage hole and set the pot upside down in the garden. You will never have to go looking for twine again.
5. Have you planted already and suddenly there is going to be an overnight frost or freeze? Small clay pots make for great cloches for protecting young plants from against just this.
6. Create natural markers by writing on the flat surfaces of stones using a permanent marker to identify which plant is which. Place them at or near the base of your plants.



7. Are aphids wreaking havoc on your garden? You can control them with a strong blast of water from the hose or with insecticidal soap. Another option would be to get some tape and wrap it around your hand, sticky side out and pat the leaves of the infected plants. They like to hide under the leaves so it is best to start there.
8. If you are boiling or steaming vegetables, instead of pouring the water down the drain use it to water the potted patio plants. You will be amazed how much these plants love your "vegetable soup".
9. Use your left-over tea and coffee grounds to acidify the soil of your acid-loving plants. Some of these acid-loving plants include azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias and gardenias. You only need a light sprinkle (one-quarter of an inch) applied once a month, this will keep the pH of the soil more on the acidic side.
10. Use chamomile tea to control damping-off fungus, which often suddenly attacks young seedlings. Add a spot of tea to the soil around the base of seedlings once a week or use it as a foliar spray.
11. Do you need to dry herbs quickly? Simply, lay a sheet of newspaper on the seat of your car, arrange the herbs in a single layer, then roll up the windows and close the doors. Your herbs will be dried to perfection and your car will smell great!