

# COMPLETELY WELL



Insurance Agency

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## A SHOT AT HEALTH

While we normally think of vaccines as being a part of childhood wellness care, vaccines – or immunizations – are recommended for children and adults. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (formed by the Department of Health and Human Services) has created a recommended schedule for immunizations according to age: Birth – 18 Years and Adult. These schedules, readily available from the CDC website or from your doctor’s office, list the vaccine and specific ages that the dose should be given according to the recommendation. Here is some information about vaccines that you may not know.

**How do vaccines work?**  
Everyone is born with an immune system that sees germs as something to fight.

The body produces antibodies to fight the germs, virus or bacteria (also known as “antigens”). Once the antigens have been destroyed, the cells that helped produce antibodies remain. These cells - memory cells - remember the original antigen and can fight it again, creating immunity. Vaccines contain killed or weakened antigens of common diseases. They cause the body to create the antibodies needed to fight the antigens, but they are not strong enough for the body to respond with the disease symptoms, though occasionally mild symptoms may be present. Thus, the vaccine creates immunity without actually producing the illness.

**How are vaccines regulated?**  
The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for the “safety, efficacy, purity

and potency” of all drugs, including vaccines. Vaccines take, on average, a little over 10 years to go from development to your doctor’s office. But the regulations don’t end there. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) collects information on possible side effects or adverse reactions. Additionally, the Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment Network (established in 2001) receives and reviews vaccine safety questions, conducts research and is also studying the role of genetics in vaccine safety. Also, as each vaccine batch is created, samples are given to the FDA for testing before they are distributed to the medical community.

Talk with your doctor about what vaccines are recommended for you and your family.

## Preventive

## Produce of the Month Kiwifruit

Small and fuzzy skinned, the kiwifruit surprises many with a bright green fruit that is sweet and an excellent source of vitamin C. Recent research finds links between eating kiwifruit and improved digestion and lowered triglycerides (which is good for heart health).

**The Basics:** choose a kiwifruit that is not too soft or has obvious spots or bruises. Kiwifruit will ripen if left at room temperature or put in a paper bag. If you do not need the kiwifruit immediately, choose one that is slightly firm and let it ripen. To use, cut and spoon out the fruit or peel with a knife and slice and cut. You can store kiwifruit in the refrigerator for 5-7 days. If putting kiwifruit into a fruit salad, consider adding it just before serving. Kiwifruit can cause other fruits in the salad to soften if stored together.

**Try This:** Try kiwi with chicken or pork. You can use it in tropical chutney on fish, or add chopped kiwi to yogurt or a low-fat ice cream. Kiwifruit is also a great addition to smoothies or tarts.

**The Facts:** A whole kiwifruit has approximately 40 calories and is a very good source of fiber and vitamin C.

**WARNING: There is evidence that people with a latex allergy may have a reaction to kiwifruit.**



## GRAINS: THE WHOLE STORY

### Nutrition

No carbs? Yes carbs? Gluten free? If you are confused about the role of carbohydrates – especially grains – then it is time to set the record straight.

**The myth of no carbs:** The diet fads tend to swing, and we have seen the high protein/no-low carb diet trend for a while. These diets say they produce more rapid weight loss, but the research shows that the initial weight loss is water weight. Also, many high protein diets are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. High protein diets can be hard on the kidneys and do not provide the fiber needed for good digestive health.

**Saying yes to carbs:** We know that carbohydrates are necessary fuel for the body and are especially important for the brain and nervous system. Carbohydrates can be found in vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and grains.

Choosing fresh or frozen vegetables and fruits and eating them without added sauces or fats is a great way to get your carbohydrates.

**Great Grains:** Whole grains are also a great source of carbohydrates. The bad rap that grains have gotten is a result of simple (refined) carbohydrates – the grains that have been stripped of fiber and nutrients (e.g., white bread, white rice, sugar, and processed foods). Simple or refined carbohydrates can cause blood sugars to spike then plummet. Also, simple carbohydrates lack the necessary fiber that helps your digestive system function properly. Choose whole grains (whole wheat, oats, bulgur, corn, brown rice, quinoa, rye, barley, and wild rice). Need gluten free diet to treat celiac disease? Choose corn, quinoa, and rice.

**Lifestyle****Turning Off Autopilot**

We've all experienced it: the out of body feeling when we've driven and not really remembered each stop and turn or walking into a room and not knowing what you were going to get or do. This lack of awareness – this autopilot – is part of our lives. In fact, according to a study published in Science Magazine, we spend almost half our day “mind wandering,” not focusing on what we are doing or seeing or experiencing (Nov. 2010). The study goes on to say that people reported being unhappy during the “mind wandering” and were happy when engaged in physical activity (such as exercise) and interacting with people.

So if autopilot doesn't make us happy, what can we do about it? We have been told to “live in the moment,” yet it is not easy to stop drifting into the past or imagining the future. In fact, living in the moment – or being mindful – is a habit, one that can and must be developed. Choosing to focus on what you are doing at the moment, what you are physically feeling, your environment, the light, the sounds, and the people around you can help you stay grounded in the present.

Okay, turning off autopilot is supposed to make us happier and can be done by developing a habit of mindfulness. Are there any other benefits? Yes! According to research done by Kirk Brown and Richard M. Ryan (University of Rochester), the more mindful you are – the less on autopilot – the more stable your moods will be and the less stress you will feel. Also, increased mindfulness is related to more controlled behavior and greater happiness (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*). It is also associated with clearer thinking and reasoning.

Mindfulness is developed by practicing it. You can try yoga, meditation, or simply stopping to take a breath from time to time. The more often you focus on you in the moment, the easier it will be to do. Try to add some mindfulness to every day and take yourself off autopilot.

**Tips for Turning Off Autopilot**

- Slow down when you are eating and don't eat in front of the television.
- Take time for a few deep breaths every morning and afternoon.
- Choose a new route to drive to work.

**Less is More: Clothes Shopping**

Clothes are an extremely important part of our lives. We have to dress professionally for work and dress for whatever the weather gives us! Sometimes, when you're on a budget, finding clothes that do not break the bank can be hard. Here are a few quick tips to keep in mind.

- 1) Buy clothes in the off-season. Buying clothes out of season can save you a lot - even 50-60% off.
- 2) Shop the discount stores. Many of these places have name brand items just for a lot less!
- 3) Buy multiple items when they are on sale. This works great for basic tops and jeans.
- 4) Plan a wardrobe for work. Buy the basics (dress pants, dress shoes, and a fitted jacket) and pick up blouses, shirts, ties, accessories, etc. when stores are having sales.
- 5) Save up! Set aside a set number of dollars each paycheck for clothing items. This way it's not so difficult when you really need to purchase something.

-Marie McFadden, CHES

Weight Training is an important component of a well-rounded exercise program. Weight training can help improve self-confidence and body satisfaction by increasing strength, building and toning muscles and increasing muscular endurance. It can help with weight loss, prevent osteoporosis, develop coordination and balance, and prevent injuries due to weak muscles. Every individual will have certain genetic characteristics that impact how they develop strength and how their body changes.

Consumer Report states that one of the major differences between a successful and an unsuccessful exercise program was the use of weights or other devices to increase strength through muscle resistance training. Weight training can significantly impact weight loss. It also helps to slow down the loss of muscle mass that comes with aging. With proper training, a 60 or 70 year old can be as muscularly fit as a 30 year old. Because it is a weight bearing exercise, weight training can also slow the loss of bone mass. Strength training is also associated with less fatigue and the ability to focus better.

Weight training can be accomplished a number of ways. Weight training can be accomplished through the use of free weights, weight machines, body weight and resistance bands. Free weights, called dumbbells or barbells, are available in most health clubs and are available for purchase at sporting goods stores and many discount stores. The concern about free weights is that, without the proper exercise form, injuries are more likely than when using weight machines. Beginning with light weights and/or working out with a trainer can be a good way to start. Weight machines are a good choice for many beginning exercisers but almost always require a health club or gym membership. Pushup, pull-ups, lunges, and squats are examples of using your own body weight for weight training. Resistance bands are another method for weight training. Resistance bands are easy to store and can be used in a number of different ways but can take some time to learn and get used to. Many bands will include some sort of instruction with their purchase (flyer or even DVD).

Repetitions and sets are the way that weight lifting is tracked and counted. A repetition is how many times an exercise is repeated during one set with a set amount of weight. 3 sets of 10 repetitions of a leg curl would mean doing 10 leg curls, resting and then repeating the activity two more times. Pay attention to proper technique and make sure you can do the amount of weight 8 to 12 times for 2 sets. If you can't lift the weight 8 times, the weight is too heavy. If you can lift more than 12 repetitions without any problems, you may want to increase your weight.

How often should you lift? Start by lifting 2-3 times per week and exercising all major muscle groups. Take a day off after each session. More advanced lifters can lift 4-6 times per week. Just be sure to exercise different muscle groups on different days.

**Remember: Don't begin any new exercise program without first discussing it with your doctor.**

## Ask the Trainer

Question: I am a 56-year-old woman wanting to get back in shape. It's been years since I have worked out on a regular basis. I have about 30-40lbs I want to lose. What are some things that I can measure to see if I'm making any progress with my body?

First off, congrats on making the decision to get back in shape, you are one step closer to achieving your goal by seeking advice and setting a goal for yourself. I will tell you that you want to aim to lose about 1-2lbs a week to be healthy and to keep the weight off.

There are so many ways to keep track and measure your progress with setting a weight loss goal. Remember that, even though your goal is to lose weight, it's not always the number on the scale that will show you results. You should always keep an exercise journal with the information below in it. This will help you track your progress along with way of your weight loss journey.

### Ways to track weight loss progress:

1. **Body Measurements:** When starting to get back in shape (or even continuing a workout routine), you want to take body measurements. Measure you hips, waist, chest, thighs and upper arms along with other problem areas. These measurements will decrease as you lose fat. And hopefully you will be replacing fat with muscle as well.
2. **Resting Heart Rate:** The stronger, more efficient your heart is, the lower your resting heart rate will be.
3. **Clothes:** If you are trying to lose weight and fat, you may notice that your clothes are looser and starting to fit better. It's always a great feeling to drop a size or two.
4. **Pictures:** Always take before pictures. Take a front, side and back view picture in form fitting clothes. As you start to lose weight and take pictures along the way, you will see the difference. Sometimes we see ourselves a certain way in the mirror and don't recognize our achievements. When you have pictures it's hard not to see your amazing results!
5. **Weight:** I put this last because this isn't the most important factor when getting back in shape like you may think. I've had many people go down a few sizes and change their body shape without losing much weight. That is because they replaced fat with muscle and carry their weight differently.

Good luck with your goal and if you have any other questions just let us know!

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**Contact TCU Insurance for more information on wellness programs and how they can help reduce healthcare costs and improve employee wellness.**



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