

Wellness News

April 2023

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“Don’t wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul.” – Luther Burbank



Anthem members: You can view and manage your benefits, access wellness tools and resources to improve your overall wellbeing. Simply scan this QR code with your smartphone’s camera to download the Sydney Health app.

Tip: Anthem.com and Sydney Health use the same username and password!



Allergies: Understanding & Managing Symptoms

Watery eyes, itchiness, runny nose. Sound familiar? If so, you might have allergies. Allergies happen when your immune system has a bad response to something that's usually harmless — tree pollen, dust, pet hair, or certain foods. The immune system identifies these things as dangerous, setting off an allergic reaction, like sneezing or a rash.

What causes allergies?

Allergies can develop at any age. Family history and the environment, including where you live, can play a role. If both your parents have allergies, you'll probably have allergies, but you may not be allergic to the same things or have the same reactions.

10 common allergy triggers

1. Pollen
2. Mold
3. Food
4. Dust
5. Pet dander
6. Insect bites
7. Medicines
8. Latex
9. Jewelry
10. Perfumes and lotions

Signs and symptoms

- Breathing problems or wheezing
- Diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, or headache
- Itchy eyes, nose, mouth, throat, or skin
- Runny or stuffy nose, coughing, and sneezing
- Skin rash or hives
- Watery, red, or swollen eyes

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What can you do?

The best way to reduce symptoms is to avoid the things that cause your allergies. It might be easy to stay away from certain foods or medicines. If your allergy trigger comes from the air around you, it can be hard to avoid.

Talk with your doctor about your allergies. They may want to do a skin or blood test to pinpoint the type of allergy you have. They may also have you avoid certain foods or allergy triggers to see if you get better.

How to allergy-proof your surroundings



- **Air filters:** Change your furnace and air conditioner filter each season. Using a small particle or HEPA filter is best.



- **Bedding:** Wash sheets, pillowcases, and blankets at least once a week in hot water. Use covers for pillows, mattresses, and box springs to guard against dust mites.



- **Cleaning:** Dust often, avoid harsh chemicals, and wear a mask when you vacuum, clean, work in the garden, or mow the lawn.



- **Floors:** If you can, get hardwood or linoleum floors instead of carpet. If you have carpet or rugs, vacuum at least once a week.



- **Smoking:** Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Avoid cigarette smoke when you go out.



- **Temperature:** Dust mites and mold love hot, humid houses. Keep the temperature in your home at 70°F and the humidity under 50% to prevent mold from growing.



- **Windows:** Keep them closed and use air conditioning if allergic to pollen.



Anthem members who may be Living with **Asthma** please take advantage of our ***ConditionCare program** – confidential, and no cost to

*Available for most groups



To learn more log-in to Sydney, select **MENU** on the bottom navigation bar, **My Health Dashboard**, then **Featured Programs**

Healthy Choices

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over the other.

~ William James



April is Stress Awareness Month

April is National Stress Awareness Month to raise awareness of the negative impact of stress. There is no single definition for stress, but the most common explanation is physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension. While not all stress is bad, long-term stress can have harmful impacts on health.

It's critical to recognize what stress and anxiety look like, take steps to build resilience and manage job stress, and know where to go for help. The symptoms of stress may be physical or emotional. Common reactions to a stressful event include disbelief; feelings of fear, shock, anger, sadness, numbness, or frustration; changes in appetite, energy, and interests; difficulty sleeping, concentrating, and making decisions; physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and rashes; worsening of chronic health or mental health conditions.

Healthy ways to cope with stress

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. It's good to be informed but consider limiting news and disconnecting from phone, tv, and screens for a while.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and give yourself a break.
- **Take care of your body.** Exercise regularly. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Talk to others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a parent, friend, counselor, doctor, or pastor.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- **Recognize when you need more help.** If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor.

Top Foods to Relieve Stress

Certain foods can enhance your body's ability to handle stress, packed with essential nutrients needed to boost your mental state. Try incorporating some of these foods into your diet to help relieve stress naturally.

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1. Oatmeal | 4. Oysters | 7. Berries |
| 2. Asparagus | 5. Dark chocolate | |
| 3. Salmon & tuna | 6. Chamomile tea | |

Stress is part of our daily lives. Remembering to make good choices about the foods you eat will give your body the essential nutrients to keep you staying healthy and functioning at your best.

Anthem members:

Change your mind. Change your life.™

With you every step of the way

Emotional Wellbeing Resources offer help when you need it

FYI: You can create an account for your covered minor dependent (13 –17 years).



Log into Sydney, select MENU, select My Health Dashboard, select Featured Programs.



Benefits of Indoor Plants

Many people enjoy living and working in cultivated greenspaces, and most like having beautiful plants around. But is there more to it? Here are seven benefits science says indoor plants may provide.

Bringing plants into your home is aesthetically pleasing and – amazingly – plants can offer strong health benefits as well! Multiple studies have proven that indoor plants keep you healthier and happier, offering both psychological and physical health benefits.

Improving your mood

Plants not only can brighten up your surroundings, but they can lift your mood. Employees who work in offices with plants tend to feel better about their jobs, worry less, and take fewer sick days. Flowers are a good pick-me-up. So, liven up your room with blooms, like a lipstick plant, or a fresh bouquet and see if your outlook improves.

Reducing fatigue

Plants take in carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. It's how they turn sunlight into food, a process called photosynthesis. Some, like gerbera daisies, keep giving off oxygen even after the sun goes down. Put a few cheerful pots in your bedroom and the extra oxygen may help you sleep more soundly and reduce fatigue.

Lowering stress and anxiety

Feeling the weight of daily pressures? Try and add a heart-leaf philodendron or a snake plant to your décor. It may help you relax. Several studies have measured people's levels of blood pressure, heart rate, and the stress hormone cortisol while they handled a tough task or were under mental stress. Being around plants has a calming effect on people.

Improving office performance and focus

Plants may help raise your test scores, make it easier to concentrate on your tasks, and strengthen your memory. Students in classrooms



with three potted plants performed better on math, spelling, reading, and science tests than kids in classrooms without any greens. Bring home a new plant and you just might clear that to-do list.

Boosting healing and pain tolerance

Being able to look at plants and flowers may speed your recovery from an illness, injury, or surgery. Research shows that people recuperating from several kinds of surgery needed less pain medication and had shorter hospital stays than people who weren't looking at greenery during their recovery periods. It's important to note that most research focuses on plants and natural scenery in hospital settings rather than at home.

Improving air quality

Carpets, paint, cleaners, printers, and many other indoor objects give off pollutants called volatile organic compounds (VOCs). They can build up in the air and irritate your eyes and skin, worsen your asthma, or make it hard to breathe. Houseplants can soak up VOCs.

Easing dry skin and respiratory ailments

Indoor plants improve air quality in other ways as well. Plants release water vapor into the air, which increases humidity, and this can help improve respiratory and skin health by offsetting the drying effects of heating systems. This can be an incredible benefit to those with respiratory issues, headaches, and allergies.

Rosemary Roasted Salmon with Asparagus & Potatoes

This is an easy sheet pan recipe that includes two of the foods recommended to enhance your body's ability to handle stress! And with asparagus in season during springtime, it is a great time to try this.

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 ¼ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- ¾ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed
- 4 (5 ounce) skinless salmon fillets, preferably wild
- 1 medium lemon
- 2 tablespoons balsamic glaze
- ½ teaspoon whole-grain mustard



Directions:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Stir together oil, rosemary and garlic in a small bowl. Place potatoes in a large bowl and toss with 1 tablespoon of the oil mixture and 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Arrange the potatoes in an even layer on a large rimmed baking sheet. Roast until lightly browned and tender, about 20 minutes. Push the potatoes to one end of the pan.

Place asparagus in the large bowl and toss with 1 tablespoon of the oil mixture, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper. Arrange the asparagus on other end of the baking sheet. Roast until it is bright green, about 3 minutes. Push the vegetables to either end of the pan, leaving space in the center.

Brush salmon with the remaining oil mixture and sprinkle with the remaining salt and pepper. Place the salmon in the center of the pan. Thinly slice half the lemon and tuck the slices around the salmon and vegetables. Roast for 5 minutes more. Cut the remaining lemon half into wedges.

Whisk balsamic glaze and mustard in a small bowl. Brush 1 tablespoon of the mixture on the salmon. Continue roasting until the salmon is just cooked through and the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Drizzle the vegetables with the remaining sauce. Serve with the lemon wedges.

Invest In Our Planet

Let's make 2023 the best Earth Day ever! This year, we rally behind the theme "Invest In Our Planet", which highlights the importance of dedicating our time, resources, and energy to solving climate change and other environmental issues.

One way to do this is to host a community cleanup.

1. **Select an appropriate site, date, and time**—Choose a public location: a park, a river, town road or path, or a similar community site.
2. **Organize a planning group**—Decide who will be organizing the cleanup. Whether it is your friends, your organization, or just you!
3. **Gather volunteers**—Advertise your cleanup to your organization, family, friends, and/or community members
4. **Line up supplies and arrange for disposal**—Ask for donations of trash bags, refreshments, and equipment. Local hardware stores are usually willing to donate resources.
5. **Complete your cleanup**—Safety is key. Two people make a team! Wear gloves, and closed toe shoes. Bring a hat, sunscreen & water.
6. **Dispose of the waste**—Find a location to properly dispose of all the waste! Sort into trash, recyclables, and hazardous waste.