



TRUSTMARK
AFFINITY MARKETS

Healthy Foundations

Vol 5 Issue 1

Winter 2008

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- :: What's All the Buzz About MRSA?

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When Your Brain Attacks: Are You in Danger of Having a Stroke?

Did you know that stroke is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. and a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in adults? In fact, about 700,000 new strokes are reported in the U.S. each year, but few people know how to prevent one.

Stroke Is a Serious Cardiovascular Disease

Sometimes called a "brain attack," a stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted causing brain cells to start dying because the oxygen and nutrients they need to function are being denied.

Treatments Reduce Damage

It's so important to recognize the symptoms of a stroke and get to a hospital quickly. In fact, getting treatment within 60 minutes of a stroke can prevent disability.

What causes a stroke?

About 80 percent of all strokes are *ischemic strokes* caused by a blood clot blocking a blood vessel or artery in the brain. The other 20 percent of strokes are *hemorrhagic strokes* caused by a blood vessel in the brain breaking and bleeding.

What disabilities can result from a stroke?

Although a stroke is a disease of the brain, its effects on the entire body can range from mild to severe, including pain, numbness, paralysis, problems with thinking, problems with speaking and emotional problems.

What are the signs of a stroke?

To a bystander, someone having a stroke may just look unaware or confused, but recognizing the symptoms and acting quickly is key.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg (especially on one side of the body)
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause



Recognize a Stroke With F.A.S.T.

Few Americans know the symptoms of stroke. Learning them – and acting fast when they occur – could save your life or the life of a loved one. This simple test will help you detect stroke symptoms and act F.A.S.T.:

- **Face:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech:** Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?

- **Time:** If you observe any of these signs, call 911 or get to the nearest stroke center or hospital.

You can also ask the person to stick out his or her tongue. If the tongue is crooked, shifted to one side or the other, that is also an indication of a stroke.

- *Source: The American Stroke Association; the National Stroke Association; National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke*

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Go Bananas for Your Health

Bananas are one of nature's best energy sources. They help satisfy you when you're hungry and are a good source of vital nutrients, such as carbohydrates for energy, as well as vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium and dietary fiber – without added fat.

With three natural sugars and fiber bananas give an instant, sustained and substantial energy boost. In fact, just two bananas provide enough energy for a strenuous 90-minute workout.

Plus, a single medium-sized, ripe banana provides fuel for muscle and central nervous system activity and helps your body efficiently use nutrients for good health.



One banana has the following recommended daily allowance:

16%	Dietary Fiber
15%	Vitamin C
20%	Vitamin B6
11%	Potassium

The Nutrients

Bananas are the perfect post-exercise snack. During strenuous physical activity, your body loses important vitamins, like B6 and C, as well as minerals like potassium. A banana helps replace these nutrients to maintain your peak performance. This is why many marathon runners and bikers eat bananas after a race.

Preventing Disease

Certain nutrients in bananas, when eaten as part of a diet low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of several diseases, including high blood pressure and stroke, some types of cancer and heart disease.

Anemia: High in iron, bananas can stimulate the production of hemoglobin in the blood to help anemia.

Blood Pressure: High in potassium yet low in salt, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration allows the banana industry to make official claims for the fruit's ability to reduce the risk of blood pressure and stroke.

Constipation: High in fiber, bananas can help restore normal bowel action, helping to overcome the problem without resorting to laxatives.

Depression and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): According to a recent survey of people suffering from depression, many felt much better after eating a banana. Bananas contain tryptophan, a type of protein the body converts into serotonin, which makes you relax, improves your mood and generally makes you feel happier.

Hangovers: Make a banana milkshake, sweetened with honey. The banana calms the stomach and, with the help of the honey, builds up depleted blood-sugar levels, while the

milk soothes and rehydrates your system.

Heartburn: Bananas have a natural antacid effect in the body, so if you suffer from heartburn, try eating a banana for soothing relief.

Morning sickness: Snacking on bananas between meals helps you keep blood-sugar levels up and avoid morning sickness.

Mosquito bites: Before reaching for the insect bite cream, try rubbing the affected area with the inside of a banana skin to reduce swelling and irritation.

Nerves: Bananas are high in B vitamins, which can help calm the nervous system.

PMS: Forget the pills – eat a banana. The vitamin B6 it contains regulates blood glucose levels, which can affect your mood.

Smoking: Bananas can also help people trying to give up smoking. Their B6, B12, potassium and magnesium help the body recover from the effects of nicotine withdrawal.

Stress: Potassium is a vital mineral, which helps normalize the heartbeat, sends oxygen to the brain and regulates your body's water balance. When we are stressed, our metabolic rate rises, thereby reducing our potassium levels. These can be balanced with the help of a high-potassium banana snack.

Strokes: According to research in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, eating bananas as part of a regular diet can cut the risk of death by strokes by as much as 40 percent.

Ulcers: The banana is used as the dietary food against intestinal disorders because of its soft texture and smoothness. It also neutralizes over-acidity and reduces irritation by coating the lining of the stomach.

Warts: Those keen on natural alternatives swear that if you want to kill off a wart, take a piece of banana skin and place it on the wart, with the yellow side out. Carefully hold the skin in place with a plaster or surgical tape.

Ripening Bananas

If the bananas you buy aren't as ripe as you'd like, try sealing them in a brown paper bag with an apple or tomato overnight.

To slow the ripening process once bananas reach your preferred ripeness, put them in the refrigerator. The skin may turn dark, but the fruit will be just right for several days.



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What's All the Buzz About MRSA?

News in recent months has been filled with reports on the spread of MRSA, the nasty little "superbug" that once confined itself to hospitals but is now showing up in schools and locker rooms across the country. MRSA, often said as a single word, "mersa," is one of the first germs to outwit all but the most powerful antibiotic drugs. But, what is it? Where did it come from? And, how do we prevent it?



What is MRSA?

MRSA, short for methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, is an infection caused by staphylococcus aureus bacteria — often called "staph." Decades ago, a strain of staph emerged in hospitals that was resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to treat it.

Staph bacteria are normally found on the skin or in the nose of about one-third of the population. If you have staph on your skin or in your nose but aren't sick, you are considered "colonized" but not infected with MRSA. Healthy people can be colonized with MRSA and have no ill effects, however, they can pass the germ to others.

The bacteria are generally harmless unless they enter the body through a cut or other wound, and even then they often cause only minor skin problems in healthy people. But in older adults and people who are ill or have weakened immune systems, ordinary staph infections result in MRSA or community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA), which can be fatal when not treated properly. Even if not deadly, MRSA can still cause many serious skin and soft tissue infections, as well as a serious form of pneumonia.

Signs and Symptoms

MRSA skin infections, which are transmitted primarily by skin-to-skin contact and contact with surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection, generally start as small red bumps that resemble pimples, boils or spider bites. These can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses that require surgical draining.

Sometimes the bacteria remain confined to the skin. But they can also burrow deep into the body, causing potentially life-threatening infections in bones, joints, surgical wounds, the bloodstream, heart valves and lungs.

What Causes MRSA?

Protecting Yourself From MRSA in the Hospital

- **Ask all hospital staff to wash their hands** before touching you — every time.
- **Wash your own hands frequently.**
- **Ask to be bathed with disposable cloths** treated with a disinfectant rather than with soap and water.
- **Make sure that intravenous tubes and catheters are inserted and removed under sterile conditions;** some hospitals have dramatically reduced MRSA blood infections simply by sterilizing patients' skin before using catheters.

Protecting Yourself From MRSA in Your Community

- **Keep personal items personal.** Avoid sharing items such as towels, sheets, razors, clothing and athletic equipment. MRSA spreads on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.
- **Keep wounds covered.** Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. The pus from infected sores often contains MRSA, and keeping wounds covered will help keep the bacteria from spreading.
- **Sanitize linens.** If you have a cut or sore, wash towels and bed linens in hot water with added bleach and dry them in a hot dryer. Wash gym and athletic clothes after each wearing.
- **Wash your hands.** In or out of the hospital, scrub your hands briskly for at least 15 seconds, then dry them with a disposable towel, using another towel to turn off the faucet. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer with at least 62 percent alcohol to use when you don't have access to soap and water.
- **Get tested.** If you have a skin infection that requires treatment, ask your doctor if you should be tested for MRSA. Many doctors

in food and water and germ mutation.

What Are the Risk Factors?

Because hospital and community strains of MRSA generally occur in different settings, the risk factors for the two strains differ.

Hospital-Acquired MRSA

- Current or recent hospitalization
- Residing in a long-term care facility
- Use of invasive devices, such as dialysis, catheterization, or feeding tubes

CA-MRSA

- Young age
- Participating in contact sports
- Use of invasive devices, such as dialysis, catheterization, or feeding tubes
- Weakened immune system
- Living in crowded or unsanitary conditions
- Recent hospitalizations or antibiotic use
- Association with healthcare workers

Treatment

Vancomycin is one of the few antibiotics still effective against hospital strains of MRSA infection, although the drug is no longer effective in every case. Several drugs continue to work against CA-MRSA, but CA-MRSA is a rapidly evolving bacterium, and it may be a matter of time before it, too, becomes resistant to most antibiotics. Some hospitals are already seeing outbreaks of vancomycin-resistant MRSA. To help reduce that threat, doctors may drain an abscess caused by MRSA rather than treat the infection with drugs.

Prevention

Still, the best way to prevent the spread of germs is for healthcare workers to wash their hands frequently, to properly disinfect hospital surfaces and to take other precautions, such as wearing a mask when working with people with weakened immune systems. In the hospital, people who are infected or colonized with MRSA are placed in isolation to prevent it from spreading to other patients and healthcare workers. Visitors and healthcare workers caring for isolated patients may be required to wear protective garments and must follow strict hand-washing procedures.

When to Seek Medical Advice

Keep an eye on minor skin problems — pimples, insect bites, cuts and scrapes — especially in children. If wounds become infected, see your doctor. Ask to have any skin infection tested for MRSA before starting antibiotic therapy. Drugs that treat ordinary staph aren't effective against MRSA, and their use could lead to serious illness and more resistant bacteria.

treatment and creates more resistant germs.

MRSA 5 C's

While MRSA skin infections can occur anywhere, some settings, such as schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, correctional facilities and daycare centers have factors that make it easier for MRSA to be transmitted:

- **Crowding**
- Frequent skin-to-skin **contact**
- **Compromised** skin (i.e., cuts or abrasions)
- **Contaminated** items and surfaces
- Lack of **cleanliness**



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Pharmacy Corner

Making the Most of Your
Drugs

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Making the Most of Your Drugs

When used wisely, medicine can help people live longer and healthier lives. However, drugs can have harmful, even fatal, effects when used inappropriately.

Your doctors and pharmacists work to ensure the drugs you take are right for you. And, by taking an active role in your own care, you can maximize the benefits and minimize the risks.

Most doctors and pharmacists welcome questions about the drugs you're taking. AARP recommends asking the following questions whenever a new drug is prescribed:

[Be Informed](#)
[Take Charge](#)
[Maintain Your Health](#)
[Be Safe](#)



Be Informed

- When do I begin this medicine?
- Is there another kind of treatment I could try first?
- How long do I have to take it? Will I take it forever or just until I feel better?
- When do I take it? Every day? How many times a day? When during the day?
- Where can I get printed information for consumers about this medicine? Can you give me a brochure?
- Where on the Internet can I find more information about this drug?

Take Charge

- Why is this the right medicine for me?
- Is there another kind of treatment I could try first, before taking medication?
- If this is a brand new drug, is there a less expensive drug that's been on the market longer to treat my condition?
- Are there side effects? If so, what? Is there a drug with fewer side effects?
- Is there a different drug or dosage that could be better for someone of my age, gender or race?
- Is it okay to begin with a low dose to see how that works?
- Does a generic drug exist? If so, is the generic version okay for me to take?

Maintain Your Health

- How will I know if this drug is working?
- When should I expect this drug to begin working?
- What do I have to do to find out if the drug is working?

- What tests will I need while on this medicine?
- If tests are needed, what baseline test do I take now?
- What if I run out?
- How many refills do I have?

Be Safe

- How do I take this medicine? With or without food or drink?
- How long before or after eating do I take it?
- Is it okay to take this drug at the same time as other medicines?
- Can you adjust the instructions for all my medications so I can take them all on the same schedule?
- How do I store this medicine? In the refrigerator or somewhere else?
- If I have trouble swallowing, can I split the pill or crush it into food?
- Should I avoid any vitamins or over-the-counter drugs while I'm taking this drug?
- Should I avoid a particular food or beverage?
- Should I avoid any activities, such as driving or exercising?
- How do I know if what I experience while taking this drug is dangerous?
- What should I do if I experience side effects? Who should I call if I have a problem?
- What's the most important precaution I should keep in my mind while taking this drug?

Prescription Tips:

- **Ask your doctor to write on your prescription form** the reason for your drug, and the brand and generic names to ensure the pharmacist gives you the correct drug.
- **Ask your doctor to avoid abbreviations** on your prescription so no one misreads them.
- **Ask if aging will affect your reaction to a new drug.** As we age, changes in our bodies affect how we react to drugs. Less saliva, slower stomach action, and differences in how our kidneys and livers work – make us process drugs differently than younger people.



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Get a Handle on Safe Snow Shoveling

While shoveling snow may be one of your household duties, it can be dangerous if you don't get regular physical activity. In fact, did you know that shoveling heavy snow requires as much energy as running 9 miles per hour?

Plus, cold air makes it harder to work and breathe, adding extra strain on your body. And while other exercises gradually raise heart rate and blood pressure, shoveling snow produces an extremely steep rise in both rapidly.



Serious By-Products of Snow Shoveling

Heart attacks, back strain and muscle soreness can all be by-products of snow shoveling. If you are inactive and have a history of heart trouble, talk to your doctor before you grab that snow shovel. Or, better yet, ask a neighborhood kid in need of a little extra spending cash to shovel it for you.

The National Safety Council offers the following tips to help you get a handle on safe shoveling:

- **Individuals over the age of 40**, or those who are relatively inactive, should be especially careful.
- **If you have a history of heart trouble**, don't shovel without a doctor's permission.
- **Do not shovel** after eating or while smoking.
- **Take it slow!** Shoveling (like lifting weights) can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically; so pace yourself. Be sure to stretch out and warm up before taking on the task.
- **Shovel only fresh snow.** Freshly fallen, powdery snow is easier to shovel than the wet, packed-down variety.
- **Push the snow as you shovel.** It's easier on your back than lifting the snow out of the way.
- **Don't pick up too much at once.** Use a small shovel, or fill only one-fourth or one-half of a large one.
- **Lift with your legs bent, not your back.** Keep your back straight. By bending and "sitting" into the movement, you'll keep your spine upright and less stressed. Your shoulders, torso and thighs can do the work for you.
- **Do not work to the point of exhaustion.** If you run out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately.
- **Dress warmly.** Remember that extremities, such as the nose, ears, hands and feet, need extra attention during winter's cold. Wear a turtleneck sweater, cap, scarf, face protection, mittens, wool socks and waterproof boots.



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Exercise and Winter Weather: Don't Let the Cold Deter Your Fitness Goals

When it's cold outdoors, there's no need to give up your workout routine and take to the couch. You can move your exercise indoors. Or, by dressing properly and heeding a few cold-weather safety tips, you can exercise outdoors, too.

Exercising Indoors

- **Walk at the mall.** The hardest part about indoor walking is getting there. Once you get started, you'll be amazed how quickly you finish your workout.
- **Join a health club** that's convenient and geared toward your fitness level.
- **Make a splash at an indoor pool.** Working out in water is extremely effective and easy on your joints.
- **Invest in home exercise equipment** that's practical, enjoyable and easy to use.



Exercising Outdoors

- **Get your doctor's okay.** Cold air can trigger chest pain or asthma attacks in some. And, if you have any medical conditions or concerns, check with your doctor first.
- **Dress in layers.** Start with a thin layer of synthetic material, such as polypropylene, which draws sweat away from your body. Next try fleece for insulation. Top this with a waterproof, breathable outer layer. To warm the air you breathe, wear a face mask or a scarf over your mouth. Remember to wear a hat and gloves, too.
- **Choose appropriate gear.** If you'll be outdoors when natural light is poor, wear reflective clothing. To stay steady on your feet, choose footwear with enough traction to prevent falls. Wear a helmet for skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling.
- **Remember sunscreen and lip balm.** Snow reflects the sun's rays, so sunburn is possible even during the winter months.
- **Head into the wind.** You'll get less chilled on the way back if you end your workout — when you may be sweaty — with the wind at your back.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Drink water or sports drinks before, during and after your workout — even if you're not thirsty.
- **Pay attention to wind chill.** The wind can penetrate your clothes and remove the insulating layer of warm air that surrounds your body. Fast motion — such as skiing, running, cycling or skating — also creates wind chill because it increases air movement past your body. If the temperature dips below zero or the wind chill is below minus 20, choose an indoor activity instead.
- **Know when to call it quits.** If you notice a patch of hard, pale, cold skin, you may have **frostbite**. Get out of the cold and slowly warm the affected area. If you suspect **hypothermia** — characterized by intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination and fatigue — seek emergency care.



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How to Detect and Treat Cold-Related Illnesses

Prolonged exposure to low temperatures, wind or moisture — whether on a ski slope or in a stranded car — can result in cold-related illnesses, such as frostbite and hypothermia. The National Safety Council offers these tips to help you spot and put a halt to these winter hazards.

Frostbite is the most common injury resulting from exposure to severe cold.

Symptoms:

Superficial frostbite

- White, waxy, or grayish-yellow patches appear on the skin.
- Skin feels cold and numb.
- Skin surface feels stiff, but underlying tissue feels soft and pliable when depressed.

Deep frostbite

- Affects the feet or hands.
- Waxy, pale, solid skin.
- Blisters may appear.

Treatment for Both

- Move inside immediately, and seek medical attention.
- Remove any constrictive clothing items that could impair circulation.
- Place dry, sterile gauze between toes and fingers to absorb moisture and stop them from sticking together.
- Slightly elevate the affected part to reduce pain and swelling.
- If you are more than one hour from a medical facility and you have warm water, place the frostbitten part in the water (102 to 106 degrees Fahrenheit). If you do not have a thermometer, test the water first to see if it is warm, not hot. Rewarming usually takes 20 to 40 minutes or until tissues soften.

Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

Symptoms:

- Change in mental status, uncontrollable shivering, cool abdomen and a low core body temperature.
- Severe hypothermia may produce rigid muscles, dark and puffy skin, irregular heart and respiratory rates and unconsciousness.

Treatment:



Preventing Frostbite and Hypothermia

Avoid frostbite and hypothermia when you are exposed to cold temperatures by:

- Wearing layered clothing
- Eating a well-balanced diet
- Drinking warm, nonalcoholic, caffeine-free liquids to maintain fluid levels
- Avoiding becoming wet, since wet clothing loses 90 percent of its insulating value

- Move out of the cold, and call for immediate medical attention.
- Protect yourself from further heat loss by using blankets, pillows, towels or newspapers beneath and around your body, including your head.
- Replace wet clothing with dry clothing.
- If you're assisting someone else, handle the victim gently to avoid cardiac arrest.
- Remain in a horizontal (flat) position.
- If you're assisting someone else, give artificial respiration or CPR (if you are trained) as necessary.

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What to Do If You're Stranded in Winter Weather

Winter driving can be treacherous. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation offers the following tips on how to stay safe if you're ever stranded on the road in severe winter weather:



- **Stay in your vehicle.** Walking in a storm can be extremely dangerous. You can lose your way, wander out of reach, become exhausted, collapse and risk your life. Your vehicle itself provides good shelter.
- **Avoid overexertion.** Attempting to push your car, trying to jack it into a new position or shoveling snow takes great effort in storm conditions, and you could risk heart attack or other injury.
- **Calm down and think.** The storm will end and you will be found. Don't work enough to get hot and sweaty. Wet clothing loses insulation quality making you more susceptible to the effects of **hypothermia**.
- **Keep fresh air in your vehicle.** It is much better to be chilly or cold and awake than to become comfortably warm and slip into unconsciousness. Freezing-wet or wind-driven snow can plug your vehicle's exhaust system causing deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your vehicle. Check the exhaust pipe to ensure it's clear of snow.
- **Don't run the engine** unless you are certain the exhaust pipe is free of snow or other objects. Keep the radiator free from snow to prevent the engine from overheating.
- **Keep your blood circulating freely** by loosening tight clothing, changing positions frequently and moving your arms and legs. Huddle close to one another. Rub your hands together or put them under your armpits or between your legs. Remove your shoes occasionally and rub your feet.
- **Don't expect to be comfortable.** The challenge is to survive until you're found.
- **If you have access to a cell phone, dial 911 to summon help.** When you talk with authorities, be prepared to describe the location, condition of your companions and the trouble you are experiencing; follow any instructions, such as staying where you are to guide rescuers or to return to the scene; and do not hang up until you know with whom you spoke and what will happen next.

EMERGENCY KIT FOR YOUR CAR

Put together a separate disaster supplies kit for the trunk of each car:

- Several blankets or sleeping bags
- Rain gear and extra sets of dry clothing, mittens, socks and a wool cap
- Extra newspapers for insulation
- Plastic bags for sanitation
- Canned fruit, nuts, high-energy munchies and a nonelectric can opener
- Several bottles of water. Melt snow before using it for drinking water. Eating snow lowers your body temperature, increasing risk from **hypothermia**
- Cans of broth or soup
- A small shovel, a pocketknife, and small tools, such as pliers, a wrench and screwdriver
- A small sack of sand for generating traction under wheels, a set of tire chains or traction mats
- Jumper cables
- A first aid kit and necessary medications
- A flashlight with extra batteries
- A candle in a metal can or other fireproof container. While candles are generally not recommended in disaster situations, having one in your car can be a source of heat and light if you are stranded.
- Matches
- Cards, games and puzzles
- A brightly colored cloth to tie

to the antenna. Keep your car's gas tank full for emergency use and to keep the fuel line from freezing

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Healthy Foundations

Vol 5 Issue 1

Winter 2008

∴ The Alternative

- ∴ Tips to Treat Colds and Flu the 'Natural' Way
- ∴ The 411 on Organic Food

∴ To Your Health

∴ Pharmacy Corner

∴ Safety First

∴ For Your Benefits Members



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Tips to Treat Colds and Flu the 'Natural' Way

We all know there's no cure for the cold or the flu, so the best we can do is control the symptoms. There are a variety of medications that help alleviate or shorten symptom duration. But you don't necessarily have to reach for the medicine cabinet to find relief.

Here are a few things you can try the next time a cold or the flu attacks your body:



1. **Blow your nose often – and the right way** when you have a cold rather than sniffing mucus back into your head; blowing too hard can cause an earache. Instead, press a finger over one nostril while you blow gently to clear the other then wash your hands.
2. **Stay rested** as soon as a cold or the flu symptoms materialize to help your body direct its energy toward the immune battle, which taxes the body.
3. **Gargle** to moisten a sore throat and bring temporary relief. Try a teaspoon of salt dissolved in warm water, four times daily. To reduce the tickle in your throat, try an astringent gargle – such as tea – to tighten the membranes. Or use a thick, viscous gargle made with honey.
4. **Drink hot liquids** to relieve nasal congestion, help prevent dehydration, and soothe the uncomfortably inflamed membranes that line your nose and throat.
5. **Take a steamy shower** to moisturize your nasal passages and relax you. If you're dizzy from the flu, run a steamy shower while you sit on a chair nearby and take a sponge bath.
6. **Use a salve under your nose**, such as a small dab of mentholated salve, to open breathing passages and help soothe the irritated skin at the base of the nose. Menthol, eucalyptus and camphor all have mild numbing ingredients that may help relieve the pain of a nose rubbed raw.
7. **Apply hot or cold packs around your congested sinuses**. Either temperature may help you feel more comfortable. You can buy reusable hot or cold packs at a drugstore. Or make your own by heating a damp washcloth for 55 seconds in a microwave (test the temperature before using). Or, use a small bag of frozen peas as a cold pack.
8. **Sleep with an extra pillow** under your head to help drain nasal passages. If the angle is too awkward, try placing the pillows between the mattress and the box springs to create a more gradual slope.
9. **Don't fly unless necessary**. There's no point adding stress to your already stressed-out upper respiratory system, and that's what the change in air pressure will do. Flying with cold or flu congestion can hurt your eardrums as a result of pressure changes during takeoff and landing. If you must fly, use a decongestant, and carry a nasal spray with you to use just before takeoff and landing. Chewing gum and swallowing frequently can also help relieve pressure.

Remember, serious conditions can masquerade as the common cold, and a mild infection can evolve into something more serious. If you have severe symptoms or are feeling sicker with each passing day, see a doctor.

Source: WebMD



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The 411 on Organic Food

We're in the midst of an organic food boom. Once available only at health food stores, many consumers are looking for natural, environmentally friendly foods. And most of the nation's major food producers, including retail giants, are hard at work developing organic versions of everything from cereal to mac-and-cheese.

But expect to pay more. Organic foods are more labor-intensive to grow and don't get government subsidies.



Going Organic

So, are organic foods really better for you and worth the added expense? If you focus on foods that are laden with the highest amounts of pesticides, chemicals, additives and hormones, you shouldn't break the bank. Consumer Reports offers this list of the organic food items that are worth buying, and those that aren't:

Worth Buying as Often as Possible	Worth Buying If Money Is No Object	Not Worth Buying
Apples	Asparagus	Cosmetics
Baby food	Avocados	Seafood
Bell peppers	Bananas	
Celery	Bread	
Cherries	Broccoli	
Dairy	Cauliflower	
Eggs	Cereals	
Imported grapes	Canned vegetables	
Meat	Dried fruit	
Nectarines	Kiwi	
Peaches	Mangos	
Pears	Oils	
Poultry	Onions	
Potatoes	Papaya	
Red raspberries	Pasta	
Spinach	Pineapples	
Strawberries	Potato chips	
	Sweet corn	
	Sweet peas	

According to USDA, foods labeled "organic" must meet certain national standards, whether grown in the U.S. or imported from other countries. Here's the USDA's organic food primer:

What is organic food?

Food produced by farmers emphasizing the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products come from animals given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering or ionizing radiation.

Is organic food better for my family and me?

The USDA makes no claims that organically produced food is safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced food. While an increasing number of consumers believe organic food tastes better, organic food does differ from conventionally produced food in the way it is grown, handled and processed.

When I go to the supermarket, how can I tell organically produced food from conventionally produced food?

Look at package labels and watch for signs in the supermarket. Along with the national organic standards, the USDA developed strict labeling rules to help consumers know the

exact organic content of the food they buy. The USDA Organic seal also tells you that a product is at least 95 percent organic.

Single-Ingredient Foods

Look for the word "organic" and a small sticker version of the USDA Organic seal on vegetables or pieces of fruit. Or they may appear on the sign above the organic produce display. The word "organic" and the seal may also appear on packages of meat, cartons of milk or eggs, cheese and other single-ingredient foods.

Will I find the USDA Organic seal on all 100 percent organic products, or products with at least 95 percent organic ingredients?

No. The use of the seal is voluntary.

How is use of the USDA Organic seal protected?

People who sell or label a product "organic" when they know it does not meet USDA standards can be fined up to \$11,000 for each violation.

Does natural mean organic?

No. Natural and organic are not interchangeable. Other truthful claims, such as free-range, hormone-free and natural, can still appear on food labels. However, don't confuse these terms with organic. Only food labeled organic has been certified as meeting USDA organic standards.

Health experts agree, that regardless of whether you choose locally grown, organic or conventional foods, the important thing is to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. The health benefits of such a diet far outweigh any potential risks from pesticide exposure.

Organic Food Shopping Guide

The U.S. market for organic foods has skyrocketed in recent years and is expected to more than double by 2009. Here's a guide to organic labeling you can use the next time you go shopping:

- **100% organic:** No synthetic ingredients are allowed by law.
- **Organic:** At least 95 percent of ingredients are organically produced.
- **Made with organic ingredients:** At least 70 percent of ingredients are organic; the other 30 percent are from a USDA-approved list.
- **Free-range or free-roaming:** Animals had an undetermined amount of daily outdoor access. This label does not provide much information about the product.
- **Natural or all natural:** Doesn't mean organic and claims are not checked. No standard definition, except for meat and poultry products, which may not contain any artificial flavoring, colors, chemical preservatives or synthetic ingredients.

Source: The National Organic Program, Consumer reports, WebMD



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Don't Be Scammed By Imposters

Unsolicited Insurance Company Phone Calls

In light of recent events surrounding suspicious phone calls made to plan participants supposedly on behalf of some nationwide insurance companies, Trustmark Affinity Markets wants to let you and your employees know that the only time we will contact participants is to promote cost-saving programs, such as case or condition management. At that time, we will ask only for the plan participant's medical ID number and birth date – the same information that would be requested to verify their identity when calling Trustmark Affinity Markets. We would not ask them to verify any banking or account information that is not pertinent to the program offered.

The suspicious calls experienced by others in the insurance industry were from articulate, confident-sounding individuals telling the plan participant they needed the information to update their file. If at any time you receive a call that you believe is suspicious, hang up the phone and call the number on the back of your Trustmark Affinity Markets medical ID card before answering any questions.

Should you have any questions surrounding this notice, please call 866.373.9607.

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