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Take charge of breast health in your 20s and 30s

Breast cancer isn't just your mother's or grandmother's concern. It's now the most common type of cancer among women ages 15 to 39. This stark reality underscores the importance of finding ways to reduce your risk, even in your 20s and 30s.

4 proactive steps

Here's how to get a head start on protecting your breast health:

- 1. Know your normal.** No need to worry about doing breast self-exams. What's most important is knowing what your breasts usually look and feel like. That way, you can bring up any changes or potential problems with your doctor.
- 2. Bring it up.** Make breast health a part of your discussions at the doctor's office. Even if guidelines say mammograms aren't recommended until age 40, your doctor can assess your risk and let you know exactly when to start. To take a breast health assessment, click [here](#).
- 3. Lean into a healthy lifestyle.** Focus on eating lots of fruits and veggies (and less animal fats), getting consistent physical activity, and cutting back on alcohol. These changes are good for your whole body, not just your breasts. To search for a healthy recipe, click [here](#).
- 4. Consider genetic counseling.** If breast cancer runs in your family, genetic counseling can provide personalized insight into your risk and what screenings you might need.



Conversation starters

Not sure how to get the ball rolling with your doctor? Here are a few ideas:

- "I've seen stories about breast cancer in younger women lately, and it got me thinking about my own health. What kinds of checks or steps would you suggest for someone my age?"
- "I heard there's a way to calculate someone's risk of getting breast cancer. Can we do that for me?"
- "One of my relatives was diagnosed with breast cancer when they were younger, which makes me concerned about my own risk. Do you think genetic counseling or testing would be right for me?"

Knowing your risk and how to manage it can provide peace of mind and set a foundation for healthy living.



Unwrap ways to avoid holiday stress and overeating

Reaching for high-fat or sugary treats may lift spirits in the moment. But soon afterward, **emotional eating** may trigger feelings of guilt, or failure. From there, a cycle of restricting, then overeating again, can arise.

In the long run, all this can harm mental health and physical well-being. According to one recent study, stress-induced cravings tripled the chances of weight gain.

Positive ways to cope

Stopping this cycle doesn't have to mean turning down all your favorite dishes. Food is one way of connecting with family and friends.

Instead of choosing between succumbing to negative thoughts and dwelling on your diet, find ways to lower stress and stop cravings before they start. All it takes is working stress-busting strategies into your schedule. This holiday season, make time to:

- **Get active.** Even five minutes of motion can help ease an anxious mind. Build movement into your holiday festivities by walking to look at lights or going ice skating. Want to take a free fitness class? Check out **Shape Up NYC**. For a calendar of events at local parks, click [here](#).
- **Breathe deeply.** Try a few slow, deep inhales and exhales. Repeat this pattern: "In, two, three. Out, two, three."
- **Imagine peace.** Close your eyes and picture yourself in a place where you feel calm and happy.

Resilience-building foods

When cravings do strike, try adding more nutrients to your favorite snacks and treats. Doing so could ease stress, promote good health, and ward off weight gain.

To upgrade your go-to foods:

- Choose whole-grain instead of refined crackers, breads, and cereals
- Include fruits and veggies in your snacks and baked goods
- Replace oil or butter with low-fat sour cream, unsweetened apple sauce, or low-fat yogurt.

Behavioral health support

If you feel overwhelmed by stress during the holidays — or any other time — you're not alone. MetroPlusHealth has behavioral health services and resources for children, teens, and adults. To learn more, click [here](#).



Young and healthy?

You need the flu shot, too

You might be fine if you catch the flu this season — but what about the people you love? Pregnant women, older adults, and young children are at risk for serious flu-related health problems. In fact, hundreds of thousands of people go to the hospital because of the flu every year.

Keep others safe

One of the best ways to protect the people you love is to get your flu shot. The shot is the number one way to avoid getting the flu. And since you're less likely to catch the flu, you're less likely to pass it on to others, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Even if you're young and healthy, you probably come into contact with many people who aren't as fortunate. People at risk for serious flu-related illness include:

- Adults ages 65 and older
 - Children younger than age 5 — especially babies younger than 6 months old, since they are too young to get the shot
 - People with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease
- Getting your flu shot can help you avoid passing the flu to them.

Watch out for yourself

There are plenty of benefits for you, too. The vaccine reduces

your risk of having to go to the doctor with the flu by 40 to 60%, the CDC says. It also makes you less likely to miss work or school because of the flu. If you do get sick, the shot may make your symptoms less severe.

You need a flu vaccine every year for the best protection. Remember, it's not just for you — it's for the people you love, too.

Make time for a flu shot

Get your flu shot as soon as it becomes available this fall. To find a flu vaccination site in your area, click [here](#).

4 things to know about pollen and allergies

About a quarter of all U.S. adults report experiencing seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever, and it can be a major nuisance during some of the nicest times of the year.

You may be surprised to learn that pollen itself isn't causing your symptoms. Your sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, and itchy throat occur when your immune system thinks that pollen is a dangerous invader. It releases a chemical called histamine to fight pollen, which results in an onslaught of symptoms. When you suffer from a pollen allergy, that's just one important fact to know. Here are four more.

1 There are many different plants that release pollen.

Ragweed gets a lot of the blame, but there are actually many different plants that release pollen. Other common sources of weed allergies are sagebrush and tumbleweed. Trees, including birch, cedar, and oak, also release pollen that can trigger your symptoms.

2 Start taking your allergy medicine before symptoms strike.

Ideally, start taking your medicine before you expect symptoms to ramp up. This helps prevent your body from releasing histamine. Talk with your doctor about the best time to start taking your medications.



3 Take steps to reduce your symptoms.

Your best defense is reducing your exposure to pollen as much as you can. Some ways to do that include:

- Staying inside as much as possible when pollen counts are high
- Keeping your windows closed and using air-conditioning
- Taking a shower at night to remove pollen from your hair and skin

4 Sometimes, you need more than medication.

While there are many over-the-counter and prescription medications available to treat your symptoms, some people find they don't make allergies disappear completely. If this sounds familiar, then you may be a candidate for **immunotherapy**. This is a treatment that exposes you to small amounts of an allergen to help make your immune system less sensitive to it.

Sniffing and sneezing?

You may have seasonal allergies. Learn more about allergies by taking this short **quiz**.

Have diabetes? Here's what to know about UTIs

Pain, bleeding, and cramping. You feel like you gotta go — with only a drop or two coming out. These symptoms of **urinary tract infections (UTIs)** are unpleasant for everyone. But for people with diabetes, these infections occur more often — and quickly turn serious.

UTIs are about 1.5 times more common in people with type 2 diabetes than those without. If left untreated, they can cause serious complications. That includes kidney damage and blood infections.

Understanding the link

Diabetes impairs your immune system, making your white blood cells work harder to fight off infections. And diabetes is linked to chronic kidney disease. Because your kidneys produce urine, problems with these organs predispose you to health problems in and around your bladder.

Watch for warning signs

Besides cramping, urgency, and pain or burning when you pee, symptoms of UTIs include:

- Cloudy or bloody urine
- A strong odor to your urine
- Pressure in your lower belly

If the infection spreads to your kidneys, you may also develop:

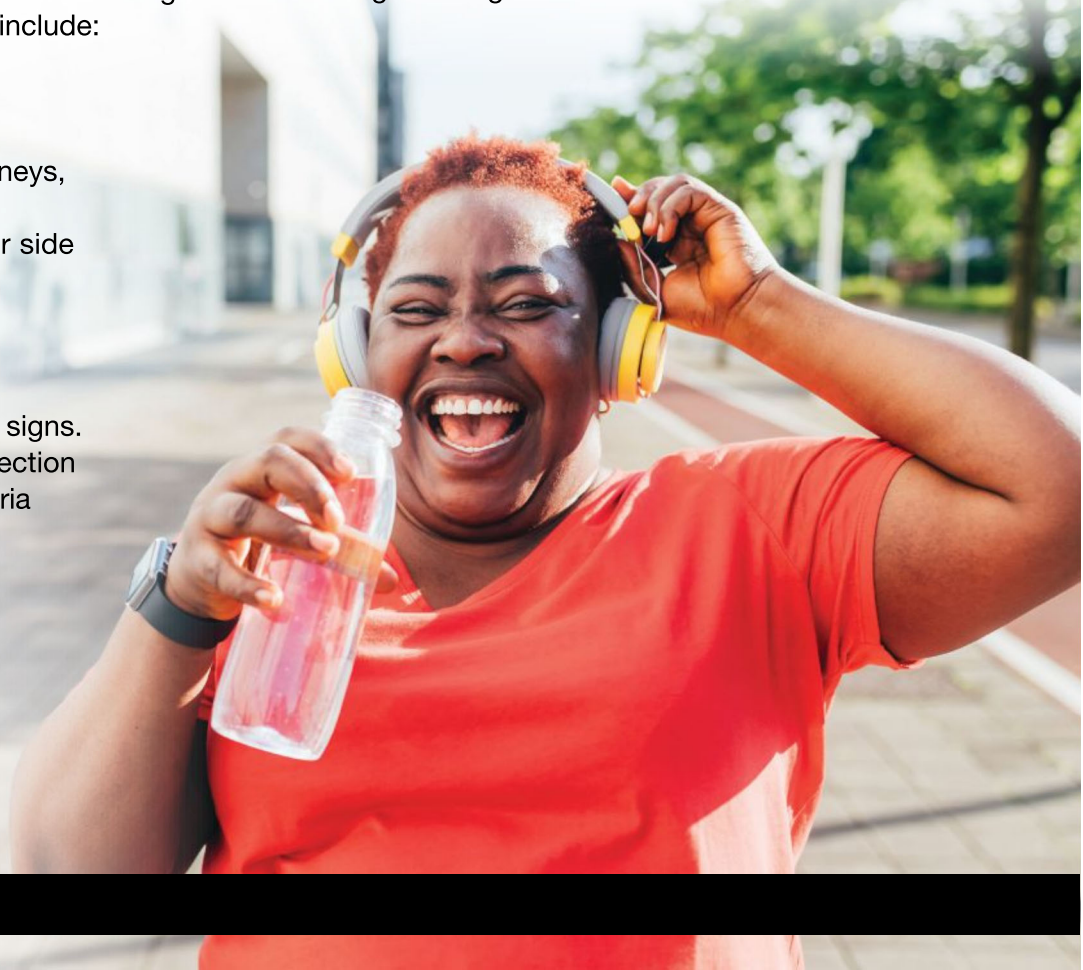
- Lower back pain or pain on your side
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea or vomiting

Call your doctor if you notice these signs. They'll test your urine to detect infection and determine which type of bacteria is causing it.

Managing your diabetes reduces your risk

Keeping your **blood glucose** under control can protect your bladder — and your health. Other steps to ward off UTIs include:

- **Drinking plenty of water.** Aim for six to eight glasses per day.
- **Wearing cotton underwear.** Steer clear of tight-fitting pants, which trap moisture. And remove bathing suits and wet workout clothes as soon as you can.
- **Practicing good hygiene.** Don't use douches, sprays, or powders.
- **Not waiting until your bladder is full to empty it.** Make frequent trips to the bathroom to keep things flowing.





Healthy breakfast casserole

Ingredients

- Olive oil spray
- 2 15 oz. cans sliced potatoes, drained
- 2 cups frozen spinach (no salt added), thawed
- 1 cup egg whites
- 2 tbsp. minced dehydrated onion
- ½ tsp. onion powder
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- ¼ cup low-fat cheddar cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray an 11-by-7-inch pan with olive oil spray.
2. Spread sliced potatoes across the bottom of the pan.
3. In a large bowl, stir together spinach, egg whites, dehydrated onion, onion powder, garlic powder, paprika, and sea salt. Pour over potatoes. Sprinkle cheese on top.
4. Bake for 20 minutes.

Makes eight servings. Each serving contains about: 100 calories, 8 g protein, 1.5 g fat, 17 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, and 470 mg sodium.

To find more healthy recipes, click [here](#).



4 ways to boost your energy level

One minute, you're alert and ready to go. The next, you feel like a smartphone with a draining battery. The problem could be **stress**, lack of sleep — or what you're eating.

Your body breaks down most of your food into glucose, its main energy source. It then releases the glucose into your bloodstream. From there, it powers your muscles, brain, and other important organs and systems. Keeping your blood sugar level steady can help you beat fatigue. Here are some tips for long-lasting energy.

1. Make your meals balanced

At each meal, include foods of various types. Whole grains, fruits, and veggies contain complex carbohydrates, which convert quickly into energy. Lean proteins and healthy fats from foods like nuts, meanwhile, provide staying power. Keep healthier options in sight and within reach.

2. Fill up (just) enough

Running low by not eating enough can sap your energy, but so can overeating. Follow your fullness cues. If zero is famished and 10 is bursting, aim to reach a level of six — comfortably full — at meals.

3. Stay hydrated

Dehydration can leave you feeling depleted. Drink plenty of water every day. Women need about 9 cups of fluid daily and men, 13.

4. Track and tweak

Keep tabs on what you eat. Notice what makes you feel full and energized rather than hungry and tired. From there, adjust your habits for lasting pep.

What you need to know about the latest weight-loss drugs

Celebrities tout them. Diet programs and doctors recommend them. You may even know several people who take them. Behind the buzz, trendy weight-loss drugs have helped many people meet their goals and improve their health. But like any medication, there are some risks. Here's a closer look at these treatments.

Currently, there are several prescription medicines approved for weight loss. Your doctor might recommend others that were not approved for this purpose (but still have been shown to help).

The three medicines making headlines are called GLP-1s. Wegovy and Zepbound have been approved for use as weight-loss medications. The other, Ozempic, was first used to treat diabetes. Now, some doctors prescribe it for weight loss, too.

GLP-1s, including semaglutides like Wegovy and Ozempic, work by causing food to move through your stomach more slowly. You may have less of an appetite and feel fuller, sooner. For some people, this leads to weight loss.

What are the downsides?

While most weight loss occurs within six months, you may have to stay on them for a while to keep it off.

These medications can also drop your blood sugar too low, leaving you feeling weak. Other side effects include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, bowel obstructions, and stomach paralysis. Overdoses have become more common, leading to severe gastrointestinal effects.

Long-term problems might include pancreas disease. And some experts have raised concerns about muscle and bone loss, especially in older adults.

Are there other options?

Sometimes, healthy lifestyle changes, such as altering eating habits and getting more exercise, aren't enough. You may need extra help to reach your weight goals.

If these medications aren't the right choice, others work in different ways. Or your doctor might recommend a procedure

such as gastric bypass or gastric sleeve surgery.

So, how do I choose?

If you're interested in weight loss, don't just buy pills online. They might be unsafe or ineffective. Your first step should be talking with your doctor. They're your partner in reaching your health goals. Together, you can decide what will work best for your body and lifestyle.

