

WELLNESS CONNECTION

Caring for Your Mental Health

About Self-Care



Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

Here are some tips to help you get started with self-care:

- Get regular exercise. **Just 30 minutes** of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.
- Eat healthy, regular meals, and stay hydrated. A balanced diet and plenty of water can **improve your energy and focus** throughout the day. Also, limit caffeinated beverages such as soft drinks or coffee.
- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.
- Try a relaxing activity. Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy such as journaling.

- Set goals and priorities. **Decide what must get done now and what can wait.** Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.
- **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down at night or replay them in your mind.
- Focus on positivity. **Identify and challenge** your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to your friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.



Self-care looks different for everyone, and it is important to find what you need and enjoy. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. In addition, although self-care is not a cure for mental illnesses, understanding what causes or triggers your mild symptoms and what coping techniques work for you can help manage your mental health.

For other ideas for healthy practices for your mind, body, surroundings, and relationships, see the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Wellness Toolkits.

Source: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health>

Healthy Habits to Help Protect Against the Flu



The **single best way** to reduce the risk of seasonal flu and its potentially serious complications is to **get vaccinated** each year, but good health habits like avoiding people who are sick, covering your cough, and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like flu. There are also flu antiviral drugs that can be used to treat and prevent flu.

The tips and resources below will help you learn about actions you can take to **protect yourself and others** from flu and help stop the spread of germs.

1. **Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
2. **Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.
3. **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk.

4. **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.



5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
6. **Practice other good health habits.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work, or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/actions-prevent-flu.htm?web=1&wdLOR=c2480F65C-350D-4429-9379-4EDB1EDDE3B9>

Health Tip: Nighttime Habits

Create a good sleep environment.

- Make sure your **bedroom is dark** – if there are streetlights near your window, try putting up light-blocking curtains
- Keep your bedroom **quiet**
- Consider keeping electronic devices – like TVs, computers, and smartphones – out of your bedroom

Set a bedtime routine.

- Go to bed at the **same time** every night
- Try to get the **same amount** of sleep each night

- **Avoid** eating, talking on the phone, or reading in bed
- **Avoid** using computers or smartphones, watching TV, or playing video games **at bedtime**

If you're still awake after staying in bed for **more than 20 minutes**, get up. **Do something relaxing, like reading or meditating, until you feel sleepy.**

Source: <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/topics/everyday-healthy-living/mental-health-and-relationships/get-enough-sleep#panel-7>