

Preventive Practices May Keep Your Risk of COVID-19 Low

The coronavirus may be all over the news, but it's not new. What's new is the strain that causes COVID-19.

And even though it's a worldwide problem, the

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novel coronavirus is too new for vaccines or effective antiviral medications. The risk of getting COVID-19 in this country remains low if everyone practices precautions such as hand washing and social distancing. Most people who get it will recover quickly. Some high-risk patients, like the elderly and those with compromised immune systems, can have severe symptoms. Only a small percentage of patients have died from the virus.

Symptoms are similar to a cold or flu—fever, cough and shortness of breath. If you have symptoms and have recently traveled to countries with outbreaks or are close to someone who has been diagnosed, call your doctor's office. Your doctor can direct you to the right public health location for testing.

Florida Blue Is Here to Help

We're closely monitoring the developments and making it easier to get tested and treated along with access to other services. You can click the link at the top of floridablue.com or on our mobile app. In the meantime, we've made the following changes:

- **Zero copays and deductibles for the medical test for the virus.** Call your primary care doctor if you have symptoms linked to the virus. If your doctor determines you need to be tested, it's \$0 cost share for the office visit and related services for the test, as well as for the test itself.
- **Advanced access to necessary medications.** Members can get early medication refills on 30-day prescription maintenance medications. You can also use the 90-day mail order benefit. If you need help doing this, call the customer service number on the back of your member ID card.
- **Counseling for members feeling stress related to the novel coronavirus.**
- **Virtual care options for less serious medical issues.** If your plan's benefits include virtual health coverage, you can avoid a crowded doctor's office for non-emergency consults by taking advantage of [Teladoc](#). You can't get a referral for the coronavirus test from Teladoc. Please call your local doctor for a referral and local COVID-19 testing locations. Log in to your member account to learn more about your options.



Slowing the Spread of COVID-19

One of the most important ways to slow the spread of the virus involves social distancing. Simply put, social distancing means staying out of crowded places and maintaining distance from others when possible—preferably more than six feet away, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Here are some tried-and-true ways to keep viruses at bay:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds throughout the day.
- No soap and water? Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and your nose with a tissue when you



cough or sneeze, and toss the tissue in the trash.

- Clean high-touch surfaces like your cell phone, doorknobs, etc., frequently.
- If you're healthy, pass on a mask. Disposable masks may block droplets emitted by a sick person, but they don't

prevent what is in the air from entering your mouth or nose.

Want more facts about COVID-19? Visit floridablue.com/COVID19 or cdc.gov for the latest information.

Sources: cdc.gov, hopkinsmedicine.org

A Salute to the Microbes that Keep You Healthy

Most of the trillions of bacteria, viruses and fungi that live in your digestive tract are essential for your health. These microbes help digest food, protect your gut lining and boost your immune system.

Too many unhealthy microbes in your gut can lead to irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Those conditions are marked by pain, cramping,

bloating, gas, constipation or diarrhea and weight gain. It can also affect your mood, your heart and your brain.

Certain healthy microbes, such as bifidobacteria, can help decrease abdominal discomfort and bloating associated with IBS. Another good one is lactobacillus, which suppresses harmful bacteria and reduces gas.

Certain foods can help build gut health. The insoluble fiber



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in legumes, beans and fruit feeds good bacteria. Fermented foods such as yogurt, buttermilk, kimchi and sauerkraut also contain good microbes.

Probiotics refer to good bacteria found in fermented foods. They can also be found in probiotic supplements. Prebiotics refer to food sources that feed the good bacteria in your gut. Examples include asparagus, artichokes, bananas, onions, garlic and leeks.

Another important part of good gut health is good stress

management. You may have noticed when you're stressed, tired or run down, you're more likely to get sick. That's because stress can change the composition of bacteria in your gut and encourage growth of harmful bacteria.

Also, antibiotics can destroy good bacteria while attacking the harmful bacteria, so it's important to take antibiotics only when necessary. Medications such as anti-inflammatory drugs (including aspirin and ibuprofen), acid-suppressing drugs and

steroids can also throw your microbe balance off.

Food choices and lifestyle affect your gut health, which in turn affects your overall health. It's a good idea to eat whole foods with minimal processing when possible, manage stress, get regular physical activity and avoid overuse of antibiotics. If you have IBS or IBD, your doctor can provide specific recommendations for your condition.

Resources: [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org); [aboutibs.org](https://www.aboutibs.org); [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)

Hidden Greens Chocolate Protein Shake

Serves 2

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups unsweetened almond milk
- 1 cup frozen kale
- 2 to 3 pitted large Medjool dates
- 2 tablespoons hulled hemp seeds
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 large frozen banana
- Dash of cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon avocado (for thickening)
- Ice, if desired

Directions

Add all ingredients together in a high-speed blender and blend until smooth. Adjust sweetness to taste, if desired.

Tip: If your dates are dry or stiff, soak them in boiled water for a half hour and then drain well before using.



Recipe courtesy of [Ohsheglows.com](https://www.ohsheglows.com). For nutritional information [click here](#).

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ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 1-800-352-2583 (TTY: 1-800-955-8770).

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