



Health Beat

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Everything You Need to Know About the Coming Flu Season (Yep, It Could Be a Harsh One)

While there are lots of things to love about fall, the looming threat of flu season isn't one of them - but that won't stop it from arriving, sooner rather than later. "Winter is the typical flu season, with peak flu activity usually occurring in February," Richard R. Clark, MD, FAAFP, a family medicine physician at Northwestern Medicine Grayslake Outpatient Facility, told POPSUGAR. "We can begin to see cases as early as October, however, and may still see it in the early spring."

That's one reason doctors recommend getting the flu shot sometime in October, so you're protected by the time the virus begins to spread. (It takes about two weeks for your immune system to develop the antibodies.) While getting the flu shot isn't guaranteed to keep you from catching the flu, studies show it can lower your risk by 40 to 60 percent and reduce the severity of the illness if you do get it.

How Bad Is This Flu Season Expected to Be?

While that's impossible to predict, if the past couple years are any indication, it could be bad. The flu season that ran from 2017 to 2018 was one of the deadliest, with nearly 80,000 deaths caused by the flu. The one that began a year ago was the longest in 10 years, spanning 21 weeks from October to May.

Each year, scientists try to predict which strains of the flu virus will be most prevalent and develop the vaccine to match - so even if you got the flu shot last year, you'll need to get it again. "It is very important to receive the flu shot each year to provide further immunity and in recognition



of the fact that the strains covered by the vaccine change from year to year," Dr. Clark said. "Receiving the vaccine is especially important for parents and caregivers, in addition to children, older or at risk individuals, and, frankly, most everyone else."

What Else Can I Do to Protect Myself From the Flu?

Aside from getting the flu shot, it's important to practice good hygiene by washing your hands often (or using hand sanitizer) and avoiding touching your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Throughout flu season, watch for the typical symptoms: coughing, sneezing, sore throat, fever, chills, fatigue, and muscle or body aches. If you think you might be coming down with something, call your doctor and ask if you should come in. More importantly, stay home from work or school until you're certain you're no longer contagious to help prevent the spread.

Does Drinking Lemon Water Actually Have Any Health Benefits?

by Dina Gachman

Here's what happened when one writer drank two cups a day for two weeks.



Humans have been experimenting with tonics since the beginning of time. From the fountain of youth to alkaline water to kale juice, we're always searching for that magic potion that will restore health and wellness, ward off illness, and make us look and feel 10 years younger. But what if that potion isn't so mysterious? What if it's just...lemon water?

Lemon water has been touted as a health and wellness aid for years by some MDs, clean living advocates, and, of course, celebs like Gwyneth Paltrow. And unlike packaged juice cleanses that supposedly brighten your skin and age you backwards, lemon water won't break the bank. It's cheap, it's easy, and it seems safe (as long as you don't try to exist on lemon water alone)-but does it really work wonders?

Some proponents of lemon water claim that it aids digestion, detoxifies the liver, erases age spots, speeds up your metabolism, helps with depression and anxiety, relieves heartburn, wards off cancer, and reduces inflammation. I was skeptical that it could do all those things, but I figured if it does even a few it would be pretty great.

I've had lemon water here and there over the years, of course, but I decided to drink two cups a day for two

weeks to see if it would have any noticeable impact. Here's what I learned about the health benefits associated with drinking lemon water.

Lemon water benefit #1: It made my skin less dull

Lemons are high in antioxidants, which help prevent cellular damage and ward off free radicals-including those that lead to wrinkles and other complexion issues related to aging. (That's why so many skin serums contain antioxidants like vitamin C, and why dermatologists say it's a good idea to eat more antioxidant-rich foods.) I wasn't expecting miracles, and I didn't find them. But by week two I started to notice a slight improvement in my

skin. A few trouble spots had cleared up, and when I looked in the mirror, my complexion did seem to be less dull and more vibrant.

Lemon water benefit #2: It debloated my belly

Health-conscious friends of mine are always claiming that lemon water-especially warm or hot lemon water-can aid digestion and cut down on bloat. And experts do say that the citric acid in lemons can supplement your natural stomach acids to help you break down food. I also learned that lemon water is a surprisingly decent source of potassium, a mineral that helps keep sodium levels in check. (Not that I was drinking it straight, but half a cup of lemon juice has about 125 milligrams of potassium compared to about 211 milligrams in a banana.) So maybe it would also combat salt-related fluid retention? At first, I wasn't sure if my lemon water habit was benefiting my waistline, but after a few days, I noticed I was less bloated.

Lemon water benefit #3: It might have kept me sneeze-free

Citrus fruits like lemons are high in vitamin C, an

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antioxidant that research suggests may help ward off colds and reduce inflammation throughout the body. You would probably have to drink a lot of lemon water for a long period of time to really notice a difference in inflammation, and it's tough to gauge the impact of lemon water on your immune system over a short period of time. That said, I didn't get sick during my two-week experiment.

Lemon water benefit #4: It helped me drop a pound

In two weeks I lost a single pound, which may or may not have been due to the lemon water. In my case, I suspect it mostly helped with motivation. After starting my day with something as healthy as lemon water, I felt more inclined to stick with workouts, eat clean foods, and pass on caloric drinks like orange juice and soda.

Lemon water benefit #5: It lifted my spirits-a little bit, at least

In addition to all of the physical benefits, lemon water has been touted as a balm for lifting your spirits-a claim that brought out my inner skeptic. If lemon water could truly pull you out of a funk, they would bottle it and sell it for about 200 times the price. That said, maybe it was the pound I lost or just the confidence that came from sticking to a health-focused plan for two weeks, but I did feel, mentally, just a little bit lighter.

Lemon water is pretty great but...

...some of the so-called benefits are still a mystery. As for my internal organs, it's a bit of a mystery. I have no way to gauge whether or not my liver was "detoxified" or my digestive system really improved. But here's hoping that any change it had on my body was a positive one.

FDA WARNS CONSUMERS TO STOP USING THC VAPING PRODUCTS



The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is warning consumers to stop using THC vaping products as investigations into vaping-related lung injuries and deaths continue. In a statement released Friday, FDA Acting Commissioner Dr. Ned Sharpless said the ongoing outbreak of vaping-related lung injuries continues to underscore the need "to gather critical information and provide consumers with actionable information to help best protect themselves and their loved ones."

"We're strengthening our message to the public in an updated consumer alert stating that they should not use vaping products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the primary psychoactive component of the cannabis

plant," Sharpless said in the statement.

"Additionally, consumers who choose to use any vaping products should not modify or add any substances such as THC or other oils to products purchased in stores and should not purchase any vaping products, including those containing THC, off the street or from other illicit channels," he said, adding that "according to recent findings, most of the patients impacted by these illnesses reported using THC-containing products, suggesting THC products are playing a role in these illnesses."

For those who choose to continue using vaping products, particularly those containing THC, Sharpless urged monitoring for symptoms and promptly seeking medical attention if people have concerns about their health.

As of Tuesday, 1,080 cases of lung injury associated with the use of e-cigarettes or vaping have been reported to the CDC. Cases have been reported in 48 states and the US Virgin Islands.

There have been 21 deaths confirmed from 18 states: two in California, two in Kansas, two in Oregon, and one each from Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

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FDA, state and local health departments, and other clinical and public health partners are continuing to investigate the multistate outbreak of lung injury associated with using e-cigarette products.

"We now have information for 578 patients with information on substances used in e-cigarette or vaping prod-

ucts in the three months before symptom onset," CDC Principal Deputy Director Dr. Anne Schuchat said during a briefing with reporters on Thursday.

While the cause of the outbreak remains unknown, "we found that about 78% reported using THC containing products," she said. "This is a critical issue."

10 Things Every Parent And Grandparent Needs To Know About Bullying

By: Grace Eire

Bullying has become a huge problem in America. It's come to a point where some children are skipping school and even turning to destructive behavior in order to avoid the type of terrible bullying happening nationwide. Bullying isn't just "kids being kids." No. Bullying is consistent harassment that scars a person, emotionally and sometimes even physically. Bullying grinds down a person's self-worth to a pulp, making it hard to concentrate in class, or even to find the will to go to class at all.

When a kid is bullied, walking through the halls at school is like walking through a battleground unarmed.

Many schools have very good anti-bullying policies that teachers strictly enforce. However, not all schools are created equal. Sometimes, bullying goes unnoticed by schools. In those cases, it may be up to the parent, grandparent, or legal guardian to step in.

Some children have even had to switch schools due to bullying. However, before resorting to that, read up on these 10 bullying facts that every parent and grandparent should know.

1. Every Child Is Capable Of Bullying

Even if you have the sweetest, gentlest child or grandchild, the pull of peer pressure can be quite strong. If you find out that your kid is bullying, especially if they feel pressured into doing so, turn it into a teaching moment and make sure they know that being kind is more important than being liked.

2. Over 3 Million Students Are Bullied Each Year

The number is actually a bit higher than this, because not all cases of bullying are reported. That is a huge amount of students suffering each and every day in a place where they should be learning.

3. Some Teachers Don't Think Bullying Is Wrong

One in four teachers don't see anything wrong with bullying



and will only intervene about 4 percent of the time, according to DoSomething.org. If you think your student might be involved in bullying on either end, you need to make sure that the teacher is addressing the problem; otherwise, you need to step in yourself.

4. One in 10 Students Will Drop Out Because Of Bullying

Bullying isn't just a harmless part of being an adolescent: it can completely derail a life. In today's competitive society, a high school degree is essential. However, bullying keeps 10 percent of students in America from graduating.

5. There Is A Difference Between Bullying And Being Mean

Calling someone a name one time does not constitute bullying, but calling someone the same name every day for an extended period of time is bullying. Bullying is intentional and mean-spirited, while the occasional mean or emotional outburst

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might be more expected from a growing child.

6. The Bathroom Is A Bullying Hot Spot

According to BullyingStatistics.org, half of students fear being bullied in the bathroom, as the space is “out of sight and out of mind” of the teachers and authority figures at the school.

7. Kids Who Do What They Love Are Less Likely To Bully

It’s so important to encourage your kids and grandkids to do what they love most. Whether that is sports, an instrument, volunteering, theater, or chess, encourage it. Kids who join clubs and do things in which they are genuinely interested are more likely to be happy, friendly, and fulfilled, and less likely to lash out or lean into mean behaviors like bullying.

8. Cyberbullying Is A Whole Different Animal

Cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day; it can happen anonymously, and it can spread quickly. It can be challenging to trace cyberbullying back to the source, which is why it’s hard to discipline. If your child or grandchild is being cyberbullied, there are certain steps you need to take, including reporting the cyberbullying online, to the authorities, and to the schools.

9. Middle School Is The Most Common Age For Bullying

The preteen years are some of the most awkward times in a kid’s life, and that makes them more susceptible to either feel the need to bully or to be bullied themselves. In addition to verbal bullying and cyberbullying, this could include physical bullying, which is when the bully physically harms another child’s body or possessions.

Keep a keen eye out for bruises, both physical or emotional, during these years of your child or grandchild’s life. The earlier you stop bullying, the better. Remember, awareness is critical.

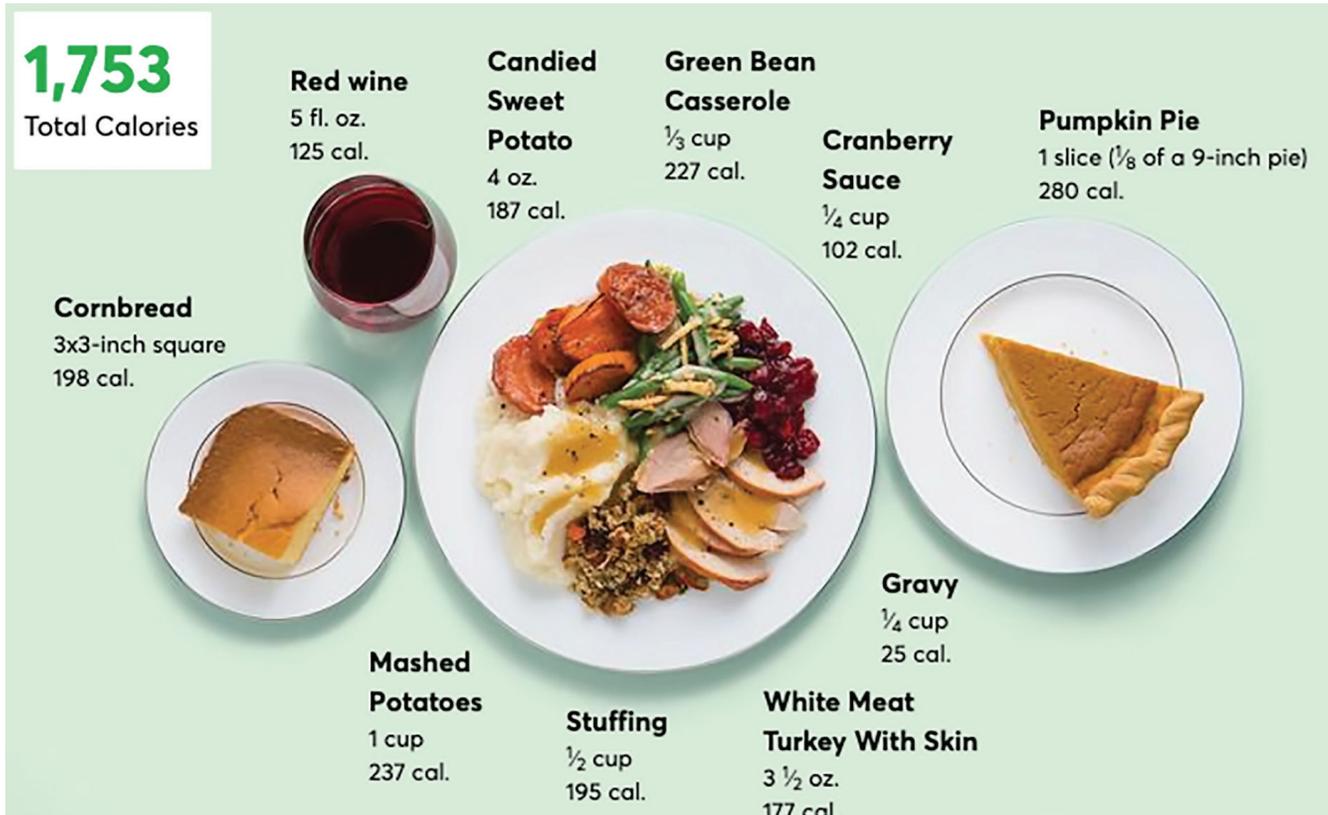
10. There Is No Federal Anti-Bullying Law

Anti-bullying laws are determined state by state, so you should know where your state stands. There are times when bullying overlaps with harassment, like when the behavior is related to race or religion. That is when the federal government can intervene.

All in all, you need to keep a close watch on your child or grandchild all the way from kindergarten to high school. Keep the lines of communication open with them, and make sure that you encourage them to talk to you about anything they need without fear of consequence.



How Many Calories Are in Thanksgiving Dinner?



Looking forward to a plentiful spread on Turkey Day but concerned about the calories in a Thanksgiving dinner? Take heart.

We cooked up a traditional holiday menu and tallied the calories. It turns out you can have an enjoyable Thanksgiving meal without depriving yourself of the season's most delicious foods.

Don't Get Stuffed

Americans take in 3,000 to 4,500 calories at their Thanksgiving celebrations, according to estimates by the Calorie Control Council. The meal we created has less than 2,000 calories but still contains a variety of seasonal favorites.

For our holiday spread, the experts in Consumer Reports' test kitchen picked some popular holiday dishes and portioned out standard-sized servings as specified by the Department of Agriculture or on the labels of the packaged items we used. Then we calculated the calorie counts of each dish per serving.

"If you're ravenous when the main event begins, you're

even more likely to overeat," Keating says. "And keep in mind that eating an extra few hundred calories on this festive day is okay as long as you resume a healthful diet the next day."

Follow our tips and you can gobble up a Thanksgiving feast with all the trimmings that's satisfyingly indulgent but isn't a calorie or nutrition catastrophe.

Turkey

This 3 1/2-ounce portion of white meat with skin (about the size of a deck of cards) delivers just 177 calories, 6 grams of fat, and 30 grams of protein. The same amount of dark meat with skin has 206 calories, 10 grams of fat, and 27 grams of protein. To lighten the calorie load, skip the crispy skin and save roughly 30 calories per serving.

Stuffing

We spooned 1/2 cup of stuffing (the size of an ice cream scoop), adding about 195 calories to the plate.

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In addition to that rather hefty calorie count, the stuffing contains 480 mg of sodium. But making a healthier stuffing requires just a few tweaks.

Most of that sodium comes from broth, so you can reduce it by using a lower-sodium version. And to lighten the calorie count, add chopped veggies like carrots and celery. That way you'll be eating less stuffing and more lower-cal vegetables in the same ½-cup portion.

Sweet Potatoes

Four ounces (equivalent to 1 medium sweet potato) of homemade candied sweet potatoes adds 187 calories. These nutritional powerhouses are brimming with antioxidants that help fight inflammation and may protect against some types of cancers.

The problem is that candied sweet potatoes are also high in added sugars. True, sweet potatoes naturally contain some sugars, but just about 7 grams. This serving of candied sweet potatoes has 20 grams of sugars, meaning that 13 grams, or about 3 teaspoons, of sugars are added.

To get the sweet potato goodness without the added sugars (and calories), opt for a plain baked sweet potato (103 calories) or roasted sweet potato chunks (about 120 calories per cup).

Green Bean Casserole

This classic dish containing green beans, cream of mushroom soup, and crispy fried onions comes in at 227 calories for a ½-cup serving. (We used the recipe on the Campbell's Condensed Cream of Mushroom Soup label.)

That's a big calorie investment, especially considering that half a cup of plain green beans has only 20 calories.

As a lighter alternative, consider serving green beans almondine, steamed string beans sautéed in a small amount of butter and tossed with slivered almonds and lemon juice.

Mashed Potatoes

One cup of mashed potatoes made with whole milk, butter, and salt adds 237 calories to the tally. For a lighter version, try using lower-fat milk, or replacing some of the butter and milk with lower-sodium chicken broth.

Gravy

A ¼-cup ladle of gravy pulls the whole meal together at an economical 25 calories. But store-bought gravy, like the one we used, is high in sodium (about 250 mg per serving), so don't go overboard. If you make your own using the turkey drippings, separating out the fat and using little salt will yield an even lower-cal gravy that's also lower in sodium.

Cornbread

This 3x3-inch square adds about 198 calories to our plate (without butter). To cut back on calories further, consider choosing among the starchy foods—stuffing, mashed potatoes, cornbread (or rolls). Have one or two, but not all three.

Wine

Whether you choose red or white, a 5 fluid ounce glass contains about 125 calories. And those calories aren't the only reason to stick to one glass. Studies show that alcohol lowers your inhibitions, so you may not make the best dietary choices after imbibing.

Pumpkin Pie

From a calorie standpoint, this is your best bet. One slice (1/8 of a 9-inch pie) of pumpkin pie (made using the Libby's Famous Pumpkin Pie recipe) has just 280 calories. By comparison, a slice of apple pie (1/8 of a 9-inch pie) supplies about 411 calories and a slice of pecan pie packs 500 calories.

With around 25 grams of sugars per slice, it's hard to tout pumpkin pie as healthy, but it does contain some nutrients, especially beta carotene, which your body converts to vitamin A. If you want a little whipped cream, go ahead. Two tablespoons of canned whipped cream add only 15 calories—and it just might be the perfect ending to your Thanksgiving meal.

Cranberry Sauce

This quintessential Thanksgiving side dish packs 102 calories per ¼-cup serving. Because the berries are tart, most recipes—like the one from the Ocean Spray Cranberry package we used—call for a lot of sugar. An easy fix: Use less sugar in your recipe, and consider adding some cinnamon, cloves, and grated orange rind to help enhance the sweetness of the sauce.



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What's for Dinner?! **SLOW COOKER CHICKPEA SWEET POTATO STEW**

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 15 oz cans garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 cups vegetable broth, fat free
- 4 cups fresh baby spinach

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the onions in a microwave safe dish and microwave 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Add all the ingredients to your slow cooker except the spinach.
3. Cook on low for 6-7 hours or on high for 3-4 hours.
4. Add in the spinach leaves and stir.
5. Cook an additional 15 minutes on high.

