

Prepping for Autumn Health Needs

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Vaccine season is here — have you added it to your to-do list? While it's easy to put off a trip to the doctor's office or pharmacy, **seasonal vaccines are essential for staying healthy**, especially for older adults who face higher risks of complications.

Vaccines aren't the only way to protect your health this fall. **Take advantage of the nutrient-rich fall harvest**, packed with fiber, vitamins, and antioxidants. We'll share what to look for at the farmers market or grocery store, along with simple strategies to help you stay well as temperatures drop and routines shift.

Annual Vaccines

Here's what you need to know based on the latest CDC guidelines (July 2025).

COVID-19

In July 2025, COVID-19 cases were rising in 27 states including Wisconsin. Fortunately, the ER visits for the virus remain low. Still, we know that older adults and those with pre-existing conditions remain most vulnerable. **The CDC and most healthcare providers recommend**

two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for those 65 and older, one dose for those 64 and younger (two if previously unvaccinated), and **up to three doses for immunocompromised individuals** as recommended by a healthcare professional.

Influenza (Flu)

Because flu strains change annually and protection fades over time, an annual flu shot is strongly recommended. (The World Health Organization monitors the virus worldwide and recommends the strains that should be included in the vaccine.) **Adults 50 and older face higher risks from flu complications than the general population**, so if you or a loved one is not in the habit of getting a flu shot, now is a good time to start. Most healthcare providers receive vaccine shipments by late summer or early fall. Check with your provider or pharmacy for availability.



One-Time Vaccines

Pneumococcal

Pneumococcal infections can lead to serious conditions including pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections. **The CDC recently lowered the recommended vaccination age to 50 for the vaccine.** If you are 50 or older and haven't yet received it, be sure to add the pneumococcal vaccine to your health plan.

Shingles

The two-dose shingles vaccine is recommended for everyone aged 50 and older. What you may not realize is that the vaccine is recommended even for those who previously had shingles — the virus remains dormant in your cells and can reactivate. Shingles can cause a painful rash and long-term nerve pain, so if you have not already done so, this one is worth prioritizing.

RSV

Respiratory syncytial virus, known as RSV, behaves like a cold, infecting the nose, throat, and lungs. **Vaccination is recommended for adults 75 and older and for those 50 to 74 who are at an increased risk for complications due to underlying health conditions.**

Nutrition

The local growing season winds down in the fall but not before producing a harvest of nutritious and tasty vegetables. Many of these vegetables provide fiber, vitamins and antioxidants. In fact, many have higher antioxidants and nutrients because of the cooler conditions.



Watch for the following fall vegetables at farmers markets and grocery stores.

Kale

- A great source for Vitamins A, C, and K, calcium, and fiber
- Benefits the immune system, bone strength, and is an anti-inflammatory
- Try sautéing with lemon and garlic.

Brussel Sprouts

- Offers fiber along with Vitamins C and K
- Good for heart health, digestion, and cancer prevention
- Tastes great when tossed with olive oil, salt, and pepper and roasted

Sweet Potatoes

- Chock full of Vitamins A and C, fiber, and potassium
- Protects vision, provides energy, and builds immunity
- Best when roasted with olive oil, salt, and pepper

Beets

- A good source of Vitamins A and C, fiber, potassium, magnesium, and copper
- Great for healthy eyes, heart, and immune system
- Roasted beets add terrific flavor and color to salads.

Carrots

- High in Vitamins A and K, potassium, fiber, and antioxidants
- Contributes to healthy vision, skin, immune function, and digestion
- Great on salads or roasted

Butternut Squash

- Filled with Vitamins A, C, E, potassium, magnesium, and fiber
- Supports the immune system, vision, blood pressure regulation, and gut health
- Try in soups and stews.

Other Autumn Health Tips

Keep Hydrating

Dehydration doesn't just happen in summer. In the cooler, drier air of fall, you're less likely to feel thirsty—but still lose fluids through breathing and skin evaporation. Because it can lead to falls, confusion, constipation, and urinary tract infections, dehydration is a serious health threat.

To ensure that you or a loved one remains hydrated, **keep a glass of water nearby, and take small sips frequently**. Additionally, **add hydrating foods to your menu** including soups, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables. **Watch for signs of dehydration** like dark urine, fatigue, dizziness, dry mouth, muscle cramps, and brain fog.



Support Respiratory Health

Autumn can be tough on the respiratory system. Humidity decreases, and with cooler temperatures, furnaces get turned on, taking even more moisture out of the air and irritating the lungs. Additionally, ragweed, tree pollen, and mold spores increase during the autumn months, leading to congestion, coughing, difficulty breathing, and even asthma attacks for some.

To improve the environment in your home, **use humidifiers and air purifiers, and clean filters and vents. Staying hydrated and active** also helps keep lungs clear and comfortable.

Stay Social

Wisconsin loses about three hours of daily sunlight between late June and late September, and even more through the fall. This drop can affect mood and energy levels, and for some even lead to depression, known as Seasonal Affective Disorder. Summer is also a busy and very social time for many who live in a cold-weather state like Wisconsin. A shift in activity level may further impact mood.

To optimize your health during this transitional season, **ensure that your diet is packed with immune-boosting foods and Vitamin D** (which we also absorb from the sun). You may even want to talk to your healthcare provider about **adding a Vitamin D supplement**. Finally, organize or sign up for social activities that you can add to your fall calendar. **Staying connected and engaged** helps fight seasonal sadness and boosts overall well-being.

Stay ahead of fall health risks with vaccines, seasonal foods, hydration, and social connection. Small steps now will help protect your well-being all season long.