

Moda Wellbeing Newsletter

Seasonal recipes, resources and tips to build
Happier, healthier, workplaces



Mindset Matters

Fall Wellness Guide: Keeping Your Immune System Strong

With cooler weather approaching, adopting a proactive mindset can help you boost your immune system and stay healthy as cold and flu season begins. Here are a few simple strategies to strengthen your defenses.

- Eating [immune boosting foods](#) such as citrus fruits, bell peppers, and broccoli for vitamin C; carrots and spinach for vitamin A; and whole grains for fiber and B vitamins. Include vitamin D-rich foods like fatty fish and fortified products and add probiotics from yogurt or fermented foods to support gut health.
- [Quality sleep is essential for immune function.](#) . During sleep, the immune system increases the production of inflammation-related [cytokines](#), guided by the body's circadian rhythm, which boosts immunity and aids recovery from illness or injury. Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night for optimal repair and rejuvenation.
- Getting [vaccinated](#) can significantly reduce your risk of getting sick and help prevent the spread of viruses to those around you. The flu and Covid-19 vaccines are updated annually to match circulating strains, making it a crucial part of your fall health routine.
- [Chronic stress](#) weakens the immune system by elevating [cortisol](#) levels, which can hinder the body's anti-inflammatory response and lead to frequent infections. Combat stress by practicing meditation, yoga, or deep breathing. [Regular physical activity](#) also reduces stress and supports immune health by promoting better circulation of immune cells, enhancing the body's ability to detect and respond to threats.



Additional resource: [How to boost your immune system - Harvard Health](#)

Better Bites: Squash and Spinach Lasagna

Low-fat milk thickened with cornstarch takes the place of a traditional bechamel and ricotta filling and it still tastes incredibly creamy. Fresh, sweet squash also lends a nice richness and part-skim mozzarella gives you that gooey cheese goodness. Perfect for a cozy fall, comforting meal!

Ingredients:

- 9 no-boil lasagna noodles
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 cups low-fat (1-percent) milk
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- Two 5-ounce packages baby spinach
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped, plus more, for garnish
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 butternut squash (about 2 ½ pounds), peeled, seeded, halved lengthwise and cut into ¼ inch-thick half-moons
- 2 cups shredded part-skim mozzarella

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Soak the lasagna noodles in warm water.
- Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic, onions and salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender and browned, about 10 minutes. If the mixture becomes too dry, add a tablespoon or two of water.
- Meanwhile, stir together 1/2 cup of the milk and the cornstarch in a small bowl until smooth. Heat the remaining 3 1/2 cups milk in a large saucepan until bubbling. Stir the cornstarch mixture into the milk and bring to a boil. Simmer, stirring, until the milk thickens to the consistency of a thin batter, about 5 minutes. Stir in the onion mixture, spinach, parsley and nutmeg, and cook until the spinach wilts. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat.
- Drain the noodles. Spread 1 cup of the spinach mixture over the bottom of a 13- by 9- by 2-inch glass or ceramic baking dish. Arrange 3 lasagna noodles over the spinach. Arrange half of the squash over the noodles, overlapping slightly, and sprinkle with one-third of the mozzarella. Spoon 1 cup spinach mixture over the cheese, and top with 3 noodles, the remaining squash and another third of the mozzarella. Top with 1 cup spinach mixture, followed by the last 3 noodles and the remaining 1 cup spinach mixture. Cover tightly with foil; reserve the remaining mozzarella.
- Bake for 40 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle the remaining mozzarella over the top. Bake until bubbling and the squash is tender, about 15 minutes. Let stand at least 10 minutes before serving.



Yields 8 servings

Recipe and image from [Food Network Kitchen](#)

Let's Learn! Resource spotlight

Sleep Right, Sleep Tight Challenge

Adults between the ages of 18 and 64 need seven to nine hours of high-quality sleep to rest, recover and rebuild our bodies. However, with 30% of adults regularly experiencing insomnia symptoms, and 35% of Americans sleeping fewer than seven hours a night, many people are experiencing the effects of sleep deprivation.

For the next three weeks, track your sleep behavior progress by marking off (O) each behavior you complete each night to improve your overall sleep.

Tips for getting a better night's sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day
- Create an ideal sleep environment. Lower the temperature to 60-67 degrees. Keep the room dark and quiet.
- Disconnect from devices 30 minutes before going to bed
- Avoid caffeine six hours before you go to bed
- Avoid a heavy meal three hours before you go to bed
- Exercise at least 30 minutes during the day (but not right before bedtime)

	Go to bed and get up at the same time	Create an ideal sleep environment	Disconnect from devices 30 min before sleeping	Avoid caffeine 6 hrs before sleeping	Avoid a heavy meal 3 hrs before sleeping	Exercise at least 30 min during the day
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Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a global campaign promoting the screening and prevention of a disease that affects 2.3 million women worldwide. Organizations participating in this campaign focus on supporting those diagnosed with breast cancer, educating the public about risk factors, and encouraging regular screenings.

When Should I Screen for Breast Cancer?

A mammogram is the most common and effective screening test for breast cancer. The US [Preventive Services Task Force recommends](#) that women with an average risk of breast cancer, aged 40 to 74, receive a mammogram every two years. This update is based on research showing that earlier screening may be beneficial for many individuals.

What Can You Do?

Talk with your doctor about when you should start regular breast cancer screenings and whether you're due for a mammogram. Preventive mammograms are typically covered at no cost. Contact your health plan to learn more about coverage and providers in your area.

Get involved – There are events throughout the year to get involved and raise awareness!

- Walk with the American Cancer Society this October: [Making Strides of Oregon and SW Washington Presented by Fred Meyer Jewelers | \(acsevents.org\)](#)
- Get involved year-round: [Oregon - Susan G. Komen®](#)

Resources to learn more:

- [Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2024](#)
- [Breast Cancer—Patient Version - NCI](#)
- [Breast Cancer Information | Susan G. Komen®](#)

Moda Health Monthly Mini Challenges

Mini challenges are a great way to encourage a healthier way of living. They're designed to create lasting change through small, simple steps, while also providing a fun activity that fosters friendly competition, teambuilding, and a supportive workplace culture.

Check out Moda Health's mini challenges for September and October:

- **Sleep Right Sleep Tight Challenge:** For this challenge track your sleep behavior progress by marking off each behavior you complete each night to improve your overall sleep. [Click here](#) to access the challenge.
- **Daily Mindfulness Challenge:** In this challenge, the goal is to implement a mindfulness practice into your week. Examples of mindfulness practices are on the challenge handout. Start with three days a week, then progress to five days a week in week 2, and progress to seven days a week in week 3. [Click here](#) to access the challenge.

Health Coaching Hub

Focusing on small changes, can help you reach big goals over time.

Even though small changes may not be as noticeable, they are more sustainable, and over time their impact is significant. Achieving small changes can provide motivation to make bigger changes in the future.

The BIG Impact of Little Wins

Celebrating your own “little wins” in the process of making lifestyle changes can lead to a shift in how you perceive yourself and your efforts towards bettering your health.

For example, one Moda member has recently seen big changes in her relationship with food by focusing on highlighting each win—no matter the size—during health coaching. At the start of her journey, she felt that “food controlled her” and that she was “powerless” when it came to making any lasting changes.

In her own words, “The health coach program has helped change my life. I felt hopeless. I had tried so many things to lose weight and nothing worked, or I could never keep the weight off. Now I feel empowered to say no to junk food and unneeded calories. My coach is the one that told me I am strong, and I can do this. And to think, it all started with eating one vegetable a week!”

The practice of stopping to reflect and celebrate each success along the way is a perfect example of how recognizing little wins impacts the journey of change and personal empowerment. With an open mind, and a willingness to try, all kinds of lifestyle changes are possible.

Contact us for more information!

Eligible Moda Health members have access to health coaching at no cost. Work one-on-one with a professional health coach to set achievable goals for your unique needs related to sleep, nutrition, exercise, weight care, stress resiliency and more.

Call 800-913-4957 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Pacific time, or email healthcoachteam@modahealth.com.

