



Wellness News

December 2024

This issue

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Anthem Members:

You can view and manage your benefits, access wellness tools and resources to improve your overall wellbeing from the [Sydney Health app](#).



Simply scan the **QR code** with your smartphone's camera to download the app today.



"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." - Benjamin Franklin



National Influenza Vaccination Week:

December 2nd - 6th *A reminder that it's not too late to get your **flu shot!***

There's still time to get vaccinated against flu. As an Anthem member, **you can receive your flu shot** at a local pharmacy, doctor's office, health department, or clinic.



Commonly asked questions about the influenza vaccine...

Should I receive this season's flu shot?

Everyone 6 months and older in the US, with rare exception, is recommended to get their annual flu shot. Exceptions and options for people 65+ plus can be discussed with a provider or pharmacist.

How do flu vaccines work, and how long does it take before they start working?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about **two weeks after vaccination**. These antibodies provide protection against strains of the flu illness.

What makes the flu vaccine "seasonal?" Do they update each year?

The vaccines are designed to protect against the flu strains that research shows will be most common during the upcoming season. For the 2024-2025 season, all flu vaccines in the US will protect against three different influenza viruses.

Source:
CDC, [cdc.gov/flu-resources](https://www.cdc.gov/flu-resources), [cdc.gov/flu/season/2024-2025.html](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/season/2024-2025.html)



Protect Yourself from Stress

Stress is a part of everyday life. We manage and cope with daily stressors on an ongoing basis, which can help us keep an emotional equilibrium, sense of control, and positive self-image. However, sometimes ongoing stress and/or significant life changes pose a greater challenge to our ability to manage our stress. When this happens, coping requires more effort and energy than what is needed for usual daily routines of life. Prolonged periods of this demand can have negative impacts on both physical and emotional health.

What does the term “coping” mean, and why is it important for both *negative* and *positive* life changes?

Coping usually involves adjusting to or tolerating negative events or realities while trying to keep a positive self-image and emotional stability. Psychological stress is usually associated with negative life changes, such as losing a job or loved one. However, all changes require some sort of adaptation. Even positive changes — such as getting married or having a child — can be stressful. Effective methods of coping with stress vary from person-to-person and by the situation or stressor.

Warning signs of stress

Being able to recognize stress in yourself is the first step to effectively managing it. The symptoms of stress are not the same for everyone, but may include:

Shoulder, neck, or back pain
Shortness of breath or chest pain
Increased mood swings
Irritability

Headaches
Inability to focus or remember things
Lack of energy
Teeth grinding or jaw clenching

Changes in eating habits or sleep
Upset stomach
Feeling overwhelmed
& more

Stress affects each person differently, and a person’s ability to cope with stress will also vary. Factors that may impact a person’s ability to cope with stress include but are not limited to past experiences, the perceived significance and the number of present stressors, and lifestyle choices which strengthen or weaken a person’s ability to adapt to new and changing circumstances.

What are some lifestyle behaviors that can improve my ability to effectively cope with stress?

Research has shown that emotional support can help buffer the negative impact of stress. Because of this, maintaining emotionally supportive relationships is an important factor which impacts our ability to cope with stress. Getting enough quality sleep, eating a well-balanced diet, exercising regularly, taking rest periods during the day to relax, engaging in activities you enjoy, practicing relaxation techniques (deep breathing, meditation, therapeutic art, etc.), and avoiding alcohol are some of the additional behaviors you can practice to improve your ability to effectively cope with stress.

What are examples of effective coping strategies that can be used for stressful events or periods of ongoing stress?

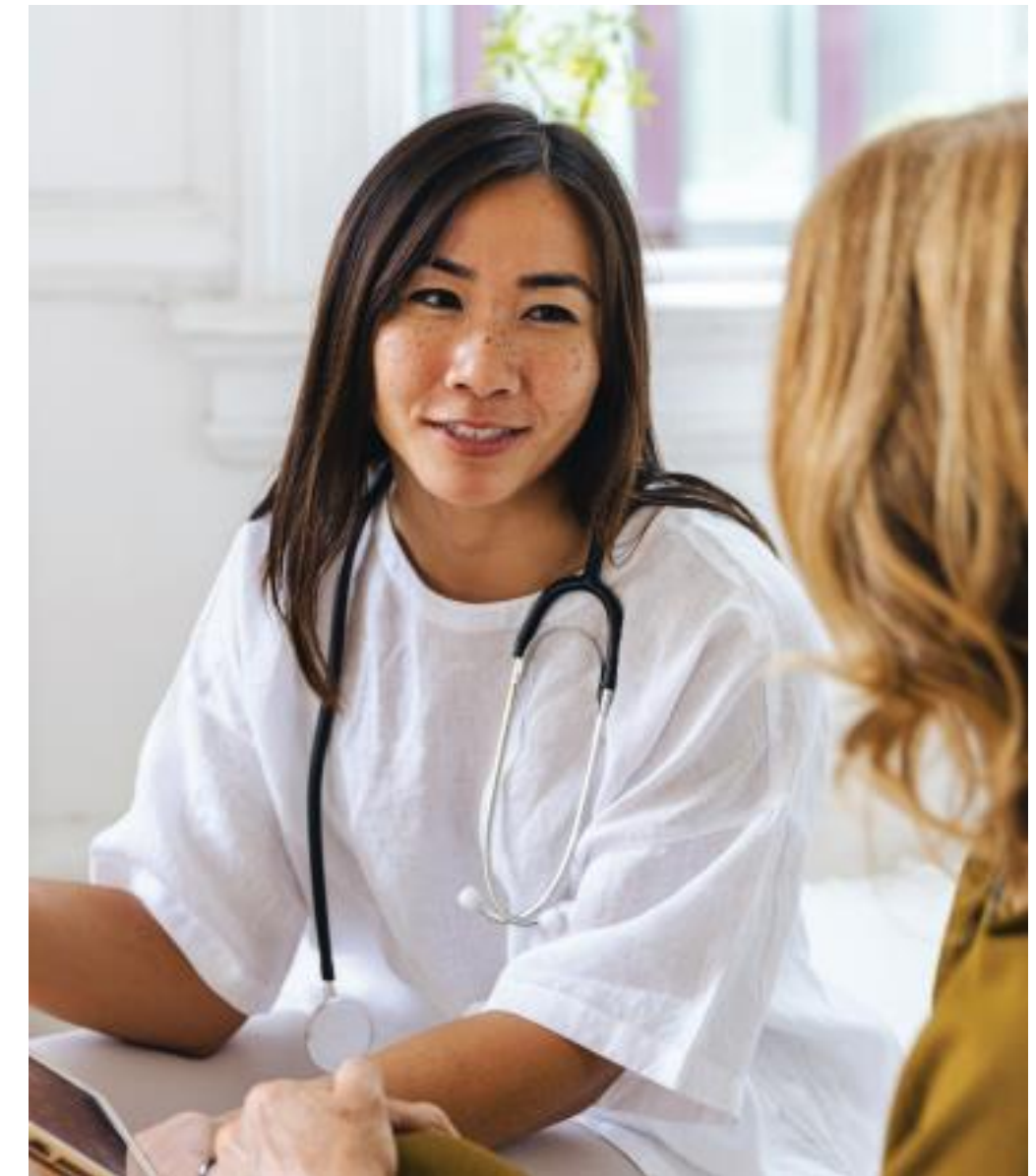
Experts agree that coping is a process rather than an event. You may alternate between several different strategies to cope with a stressful event or period. Some effective coping strategies include:

Engage in problem solving
Ask others for help
Imagine the problem from another person’s perspective

Maintain emotionally supportive relationships
Adjust expectations
Distance yourself from the stressor
Take responsibility

Challenge previously held beliefs
Practice relaxation exercises such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga, therapeutic art, etc.
& more

Source: Cleveland Clinic, my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/6392-stress-cope-with-lifes-stressors



Talk to a doctor

If you are having trouble coping with stress, reach out to a doctor or a mental health professional for help.

To find a doctor or healthcare provider in your plan’s network, use the Find Care and Cost feature on the [SydneySM Health app](#) or at [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com).



December 5th is **International Volunteer Day**

Many people volunteer to support an organization or cause that is near and dear to their heart.

But did you know that spending time volunteering can also have a positive impact on your own overall health?

Ways volunteering can benefit your overall health:

Benefit 1: It connects you to others

One of the more well-known benefits of volunteering is the impact on the community, but it can also strengthen a person's connection to the community. Volunteering allows you to connect with members of your community, while contributing time and effort to make it a better place. Your time spent volunteering may help you make new friends, expand your network, boost social skills, and find greater purpose in the community.

Benefit 2: It's good for your mind

Whether volunteering in a group environment, with animals, or in a more independent setting, the act of helping others and community can have a profound effect on your overall psychological well-being. It can help counteract the effects of stress, anger, and anxiety. By being in regular contact with others through volunteering, it can help you develop a stronger support system, which in turn protects you against depression. It can also improve thinking skills and boost self-confidence.

Benefit 3: It's good for your body

Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not. Older volunteers tend to walk more, find it easier to cope with everyday tasks, and are less likely to develop high blood pressure. Volunteering can also lessen symptoms of chronic pain and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Benefit 4: It can help advance your career and strengthen skills used in the workplace

Volunteering can help you gain experience in an area of interest and meet people in that field. It can also offer the opportunity to practice important workplace skills, such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning, task management, and organization. You might feel more comfortable stretching your wings at work once you've honed these skills in a volunteer position first.

Benefit 5: It brings fun & fulfillment to your life

Volunteering is a fun and easy way to explore your interests and passions. By choosing volunteer work that you find meaningful and interesting, your time spent can be a relaxing and energizing escape from your day-to-day routine. Volunteering also provides you with renewed creativity, motivation, and vision that can carry over into your personal and professional life.



How to find the right volunteer opportunity

There are numerous volunteer opportunities available. The key is to find a position that you would enjoy and is compatible with the time and skills you are able to provide.

Ask yourself the following:

- Would you like to work with adults, children, animals, or remotely from home?
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- Are you better behind the scenes or do you prefer to take a more visible role?
- How much time are you willing to commit?
- What skills can you bring to a volunteer job?
- What causes are important to you?

Also consider your interests, volunteer goals, and don't limit your yourself to only one possibility. Examples of where volunteer work can be found include community theatres, senior centers, animal shelters, historical restorations, Lions Clubs, conservation organizations, and more.

Curried Squash, Lentil & Coconut Soup

Warm up with this easy immune-boosting soup.

Time: About 35 minutes **Servings:** 6

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 butternut squash, peeled, deseeded and diced
- 1 1/2 cp carrot, diced
- 1 tbsp curry powder containing turmeric
- 1/2 cp red lentil
- 3 cp low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 can reduced-fat coconut milk
- coriander to serve

Directions:

Step 1

Heat oil in a large saucepan, add squash & carrots, and sizzle for 1 minute. Stir in curry powder and cook for 1 minute more. Add lentils, vegetable stock and coconut milk. Stir to combine. Bring to a boil, then turn the heat down and simmer for 15-18 minutes, until everything is tender.

Step 2

Using a hand blender or food processor, blitz the mixture until smooth to your liking. Season with salt & pepper and serve with roughly chopped coriander sprinkled on top.



Butternut Squash Healthful Benefits

Immune System Support

This winter squash is loaded with **beta-carotene** and **alpha-carotene**, which converts to vitamin A to support the immune system.

Fiber

One cup of baked butternut squash has **6.6 grams of fiber**, which aids digestion and supports keeping a healthy body weight. High-fiber foods can also help reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.

Balances Blood Sugar

The high fiber in butternut squash **helps prevent blood sugar spikes** after eating.

Lower Stroke & Heart Disease Risk

Butternut squash is high in potassium, which can help keep **blood pressure** in check and in turn, lower the risks of stroke and heart disease.



Sources:
Good Food, bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/curried-squash-lentil-coconut-soup
WebMD, webmd.com/food-recipes/butternut-squash-health-benefits