

Allergy-proof Your Spring

You may notice that you sneeze and cough more during certain times of the year. In this case, you may have seasonal allergies, which are allergy symptoms that occur during specific times of the year, typically when allergens are released into the air. The most common spring allergy trigger is tree pollen, which peaks from March to May.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America reports that 81 million people in the country are allergic to pollen, grass and weeds in the spring.

You can reduce your exposure to seasonal allergens and their impact on your body, such as sneezing, stuffy or runny nose, and watery eyes. Try these strategies to manage seasonal allergies:

- **Keep track of pollen and mold counts.** Pollen and mold counts can be found online or on the local news. Monitoring allergens, especially tree pollen, can help you know when to avoid spending excessive time outside.
- **Keep the indoor air clean.** Closing windows and doors can help prevent allergens from entering your home and sticking to items like furniture and carpet. Lean on air conditioning, and be sure to change high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters often.

- **Shower and put on clean clothing after spending time outdoors.** After playing or working outdoors, pollen may be stuck to your clothes, hair and skin, which can irritate your allergies.
- **Bathe pets often.** If your pets go inside and outside, they are likely tracking in pollen on their coats. Bathe them weekly, especially after spending a lengthy time outdoors.
- **Wash bedding weekly in hot water.** Pollen can settle on sheets and blankets, triggering allergy symptoms at bedtime and disrupting your rest.
- **Vacuum regularly.** When pollen levels are high, vacuum floors at least once a week. It's also best to use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.

For many people, avoiding allergens and using over-the-counter medications are enough to ease their allergy symptoms. Talk to your doctor if your symptoms remain bothersome; they can provide guidance on alternative treatments.

Creative Ways to Take More Steps

Walking is one of the most accessible forms of exercise. Its benefits extend beyond physical health, as it can also boost your mood and help with mental clarity. Whether new to fitness or just looking to increase your daily movement, walking offers an easy and effective way to improve your well-being. However, finding the time or motivation to walk more often can be challenging. Here are some creative and fun ways to get more steps in:

- **The 6-6-6 method**—One version of this challenge involves walking for 60 minutes at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily, with a suggested six-minute warm-up and six-minute cool-down. Another version is to walk for six minutes six times a day for six days a week to fit in more movement during the day.
- **The 12-3-30 workout**—Set a treadmill at a 12% incline and 3 mph and walk for 30 minutes. Incline walking adds intensity to your

walk to help boost calorie burn and muscle engagement. If you take a walk outdoors instead, use hilly routes or find stairs.

- **An active (or fake) commute**—If you're a remote worker, you could take a 10-minute walk in the morning or stroll after work. The point of a fake commute is to use the time that'd normally be spent commuting to an office and use it to make the day more active.
- **Walking in place**—You can do this anywhere: while watching TV, during a phone call or while waiting for something. For an extra challenge, try adding variations like marching, high knees or using light hand weights.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to improve your health and well-being; these creative strategies can help make it a regular part of your lifestyle. Talk to your doctor and discuss what works best for you to learn more about creating an active routine.

The Impact of Chronic Stress

Stress is defined as a "state of worry or mental tension" often brought on by a difficult situation. It's a natural reaction to perceived threats. Stress can be a good thing in small doses; it's the body's way of handling sudden demands and challenges.

Stress responses can enhance your focus, increase energy and promote quick responses. However, frequent and long-term chronic stress can negatively impact your health.

Stress triggers are deeply personal, and each person experiences this feeling differently. While stress is a normal part of life that will come and go as you

navigate various life circumstances (e.g., getting a new job or presenting a project), chronic stress is different. It's characterized by prolonged and constant feelings of pressure and anxiety. Chronic stress can contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression, issues with high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, sleep disturbances and digestive issues. Chronic stress, if left unchecked, can have a long-lasting impact on your physical and mental well-being.

If you're experiencing symptoms of chronic stress, reach out to your health care provider or employee assistance program for guidance and support.

Recipe of the Month

Spring Vegetable Saute

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 tsp. olive oil
- ½ cup sweet onion (sliced)
- 1 garlic clove (finely chopped)
- 3 tiny new potatoes (quartered)
- ¾ cup carrot (sliced)
- ¾ cup asparagus pieces
- ¾ cup sugar snap peas or green beans
- ½ cup radishes (quartered)
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. dried dill

Preparations

1. Heat the oil in a skillet. Cook the onion for 2 minutes, then add the garlic and cook for another minute.
2. Stir in the potatoes and carrots. Cover, turn the heat to low, and cook until almost tender, about 4 minutes.
3. If the vegetables start to brown, add a tablespoon or two of water.
4. Add the asparagus, peas, radishes, salt, black pepper and dill. Cook, stirring often, until just tender, about 4 minutes more.
5. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information

(per serving)

Total calories	138
Total fat	1 g
Protein	4 g
Sodium	177 mg
Carbohydrate	29 g
Dietary fiber	5 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Total sugars	4 g

Source: MyPlate