Influenza ("flu") is a contagious disease that spreads around the U.S. annually, usually between October and May. Flu is caused by influenza viruses, and is spread mainly by coughing, sneezing and close contact. Anyone can get flu. It strikes suddenly and can last several days. Symptoms vary by age, but can include:

- Fever/chills and sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose

Flu can also lead to pneumonia and blood infections, and can cause diarrhea and seizures in children. If you have a medical condition, such as heart or lung disease, flu can make it worse. Infants and young children, people age 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions or a weakened immune system are at greatest risk.

Each year thousands of people in the U.S. die from flu, and many more are hospitalized. Flu vaccine can:
- Keep you from getting flu
- Make flu less severe if you do get it
- Keep you from spreading flu to your family and others

There are a small number of people for whom the flu vaccine isn’t recommended, depending on their medical history. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about whether you should receive the vaccine.

— Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Chronic Pain — WHAT IS IT? WHAT CAN BE DONE?

While acute pain is a normal sensation triggered in the nervous system to alert you to possible injury, chronic pain is different. Chronic pain persists. Pain signals keep firing in the nervous system for weeks, months, even years. There may have been an initial mishap—a sprained back or serious infection—or there may be an ongoing cause of pain, such as arthritis or cancer.

Common complaints include headache, low-back pain, cancer pain, arthritis pain, neurogenic pain (pain resulting from damage to the peripheral nerves or to the central nervous system itself), and psychogenic pain (pain not due to past disease or injury or any visible sign of damage inside or outside the nervous system).

Medications, acupuncture, local electrical stimulation and brain stimulation, as well as surgery, are some treatments for chronic pain. Psychotherapy, relaxation and medication therapies, biofeedback, and behavior modification may also be used.

Many people with chronic pain can be helped if they understand all the causes of pain and the many and varied steps that can be taken to help. If you are suffering from chronic pain, talk with your doctor.

— Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance is a common digestive disorder. It means your body can’t digest lactose, the sugar found in milk products. After eating foods with lactose, you may have nausea, cramps, bloating, gas or diarrhea.

Lactose intolerance is not serious but can be quite uncomfortable. You can easily control it by changing your diet. You may not have to give up milk products entirely. Some people with lactose intolerance can eat yogurt or aged cheeses, like cheddar and Swiss, with no problem.

Lactose-reduced milk is widely available. And taking supplements that contain lactase—the enzyme that breaks down lactose in the intestines—can help you digest dairy foods. You can find lactase supplements at most grocery and drug stores.

— Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Home Healthcare

IS IT FOR YOU?

The term “home healthcare” covers a wide range of healthcare services that can be given in your home for an illness or injury. Examples of skilled home health services include:

- Wound care for pressure sores or a surgical wound
- Patient and caregiver education
- Intravenous or nutrition therapy
- Injections
- Monitoring serious illness and unstable health status

The goal of home healthcare is to treat an illness or injury. Home healthcare helps you get better, regain your independence and become as self-sufficient as possible.

If you get your Medicare benefits through a Medicare health plan, check with your plan to find out how it gives your Medicare-covered home-health benefits. If you have a Medicare Supplement Insurance policy or other health-insurance coverage, tell your doctor or other healthcare provider so your bills get paid correctly.

If your doctor decides you need home healthcare, she should give you a list of agencies that serve your area.

— Source: Medicare.gov

Your Digestive Health

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

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— Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Each spring, summer and fall, plants release tiny pollen grains to fertilize other plants of the same species. Most of the pollens that cause allergic reactions come from trees, weeds and grasses. These plants make small, light and dry pollen grains that are carried by the wind.

Among North American plants, grasses are the most common cause of allergy. Ragweed is a main culprit among the weeds, but other major sources of weed pollen include sagebrush, pigweed, lamb’s quarters and tumbleweed. Certain species of trees, including birch, cedar and oak, also produce highly allergenic pollen.

People with pollen allergy only have symptoms for the period or season when the pollen grains to which they are allergic are in the air. For example, in most parts of the U.S., grass pollen is present during the spring.

A pollen count, which is often reported by local weather broadcasts or allergy websites, is a measure of how much pollen is in the air. Pollen counts tend to be highest early in the morning on warm, dry, breezy days and lowest during chilly, wet periods. Although pollen counts reflect the most-recent 24 hours, they are useful as a general guide for when it may be wise to stay indoors with windows closed to avoid contact with a certain pollen.

— Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

**Pollen**

**WHAT ALLERGY SUFFERERS NEED TO KNOW**

On weekdays, you want something quick and easy to cook and serve the family. A delicious and healthy choice is boneless, skinless chicken breasts. But plain old grilled chicken breasts can certainly become BORING after awhile. So jazz them up with herbs, honey and balsamic vinegar and still keep your actual stove time under 16 minutes.

To keep your cooking time consistent, it is best if your chicken breasts are even in thickness. Just pound breast halves between two pieces of plastic wrap until they are 1/2 inch thick.

These tasty breasts can be paired with just about any vegetables your family likes, from potatoes and green beans to rice pilaf and asparagus or broccoli.

**Honey Balsamic Glazed Chicken Breasts**

* Serves 4

- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 4 (4 ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey

Combine thyme, salt and pepper and sprinkle over both sides of chicken. Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken. Cook 7 to 8 minutes on each side or until chicken is done and juices run clear. Transfer chicken to a platter and tent to keep warm. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add vinegar and honey to pan. Simmer 1 minute or until glaze thickens, while stirring constantly. Return chicken to the pan. Heat through, turning to coat with glaze, and serve immediately.

**Per serving:**

170 calories; 3 g fat (13.9% calories from fat); 1 g saturated fat; 26 g protein; 10 g carbohydrate; trace dietary fiber; 66 mg cholesterol; 341 mg sodium.

Recipe is low fat, low calorie, diabetic friendly and gluten free.


For more free recipes and healthy-cooking tips, visit www.lowfatlifestyle.com.
Six out of every ten falls happen at home, where we spend much of our time and tend to move around without thinking about our safety. Many falls could be prevented by making simple changes in your living areas, as well as personal and lifestyle changes.

Take steps to fall-proof your home, both inside and outdoors. To make your home safer, you can:

- Remove safety hazards
- Improve lighting
- Install handrails and grab bars
- Move items to make them easier to reach

Try these tips to help fall-proof your home:

- Remove anything that could cause you to trip or slip while walking: clutter, small furniture, pet bowls, electrical or phone cords, etc. Slipping on rugs or slick floors can also cause falls.
- Arrange furniture to give yourself plenty of room to walk freely. Remove items from stairs, hallways and pathways.
- Be sure that carpets are secured to the floor and stairs. Remove throw rugs, use non-slip rugs or attach rugs to the floor with double-sided tape.

— Source: National Institutes of Health