

# Healthy Outcomes

Down Syndrome Awareness Month

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## **Why are Respiratory Tract Infections (RTIs) one of the common causes for hospital admissions in individuals with Down Syndrome?**

[www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk)

The upper airway in individuals with Down syndrome is narrower and there are also some structural differences in the lower respiratory tract and within the lung tissues. These differences combined with low muscle tone and a higher prevalence of obesity may predispose them to developing infections. The immune system in individuals with Down's syndrome is also thought to be slightly different. Research has demonstrated that there are lower levels of some lymphocytes (white blood cells) and antibodies (infection fighting molecules) in the blood of those with Down syndrome.

*Continued page 2.*

Central PA  
Health Care Quality Unit  
Monthly Newsletter  
October 2024  
[HCQU Website](#)

### **INSIDE THIS EDITION**

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Respiratory Tract Infections and Down Syndrome  
How Does Cold Medicine Affect Blood Pressure?  
Fall Season Means Flu Season  
Intro to Cold and Flu Basics Virtual Training  
Keep it Clean-Frequency Touched Surfaces  
Special Olympics Pennsylvania  
How To Know If the Website You Are Visting is Safe  
Homemade Ranch Dressing Recipe  
HCQU Announcement

This may make it harder for them to both fight off and develop immunity to infection. Compared to the general population, individuals with Down's syndrome are also more likely to have other health problems, such as congenital heart disease, sleep disordered breathing (sleep apnea), gastro-esophageal reflux and diabetes. These conditions can make them more likely to develop infections and make it more difficult to fight off infections.

## Can you reduce the likelihood of RTIs developing?

At present it is not possible to prevent infections of the respiratory tract entirely but there are things we can do to reduce the likelihood and severity of infection. [Down Syndrome Association Health Series-Respiratory Infections](#)

### Measures to reduce the likelihood and severity of respiratory tract infections:

- Vaccinations
- Basic hygiene / infection control
  - Healthy environments
- Maintaining good general health
  - Avoiding unwell contacts
- Seeking help for unusual/persistent symptoms

## HOW DOES COLD MEDICINE AFFECT BLOOD PRESSURE?

Most over-the-counter cold medicine contains ingredients that relieve congestion, or decongestants. They come in a few forms like liquid, nasal spray, or capsules. Common types of decongestants include:

- Pseudoephedrine
- Phenylephrine

"Decongestants work by shrinking swollen blood vessels," Mitchell says. Those narrowed blood vessels reduce swelling in your nose, helping you breathe better.

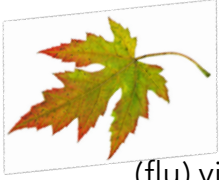
Reducing the congestion gives you some relief from your symptoms. But it's harder for blood to flow properly through these narrowed blood vessels. Because blood cannot flow as freely, your heart must work harder to pump blood through your body. This can cause blood pressure to increase.

If you already have high blood pressure, check the label before taking any cold medicine. Those that contain decongestants may have a warning label on the bottle.

### What to take instead

Looking for an alternative to decongestants? Start by having a conversation with your pharmacist. They can recommend safer alternatives. **Read more:** [Taking cold medicine with high blood pressure](#)





# Fall Season Means Flu Season

While seasonal influenza (flu) viruses are detected year-round in the United States, flu viruses typically circulate during the fall and winter during what is known as the flu season. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons varies, but flu activity often begins to increase in October. Most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although significant activity can last as late as May. Since the start of the COVID pandemic, the timing and duration of flu activity has been less predictable.

## YOUR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST FLU

Millions of people get flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands or tens of thousands of people die. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), public health professionals, and our practice recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every year. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization and even death. A flu vaccine is the best way to help prevent flu and its potentially serious complications.

## FLU VACCINATION ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR SOME

Flu vaccination is especially important for people who are at higher risk of developing serious complications from flu, including children younger than five, pregnant people, adults 65 and older, and people with certain chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. [Flu Vaccine: Get The Facts](#)

Covid-19 vs. Cold vs. Flu Symptoms			
SYMPTOMS	COVID-19*	COLD	FLU
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Common
Cough	Common	Common	Common
Sneezing	-	Common	Sometimes
Fever	Common	-	Common
Body aches	Sometimes	Sometimes (mild)	Common
Tiredness	Sometimes	Sometimes (mild)	Common
Headache	Sometimes	-	Common
Runny/stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Shortness of breath	Sometimes	-	Sometimes
Loss of taste and/or smell	Sometimes	-	-

\*Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization  
\*Information on COVID-19, including its symptoms, is still emerging.



## Upcoming HCQU Trainings:

- [Dementia Friends for IDD](#) (10/15)
- [Weis Market Virtual Cook Along: Time Saving Meal Prep and 5 Ingredient Meal](#) (10/16)
- [Intro to Cold and Flu Basics](#) (10/24)
- [Cold Weather Safety](#) (12/12)
- [Weis Market Virtual cook along: Winter Produce](#) (12/18)

# KEEP IT CLEAN

to **PROTECT YOURSELF**  
from illness and disease

Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly. These might include



Countertops and Tables



Wheelchairs



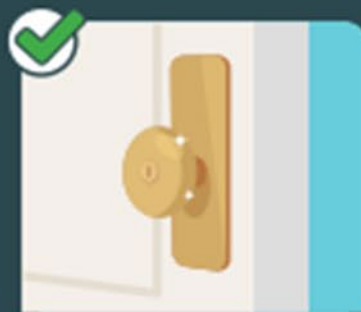
Light Switches



Scooters



Desks and Keyboards



Handles and Doorknobs



Phones



Toilets and Faucets



Walkers

Ask those who help you to assist with  
cleaning surfaces that are hard to reach.





## Find Special Olympics Near You

**Special Olympics Pennsylvania** has 54 active county and city programs that fit into 9 regions across Pennsylvania. These programs serve a growing body of 13,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities in the areas of sports, health, and leadership. Find a Special Olympics Pennsylvania [program](#).

Learn more about how you can [Get Involved](#).

## HEALTHY ATHLETES

Healthy Athletes is designed to improve athletes' health and fitness to enhance their ability to train and compete in Special Olympics. All programs are non-invasive screenings designed to offer additional support at no cost to our athletes and their families.

Healthy Athletes is made up of seven disciplines:

- [Fit Feet](#) (Podiatry)
- [FUNFitness](#) (Physical Therapy)
- [Health Promotion](#) (Better Health and Wellness)
- [Healthy Hearing](#) (Audiology)
- [MedFest](#) (Sports Physical Exam)
- [Opening Eyes](#) (Vision)
- [Special Smiles](#) (Dentistry)
- [Strong Minds](#) (Adaptive Coping Skills)



Special Olympics  
**Healthy Athletes**<sup>®</sup>

**Healthy Athletes Provider Directory** These Providers have signed an application agreeing to screen individuals with intellectual disabilities.

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*Special Olympics is the world's largest public health organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID), providing access to free health services for a population with significant, unmet health needs.*

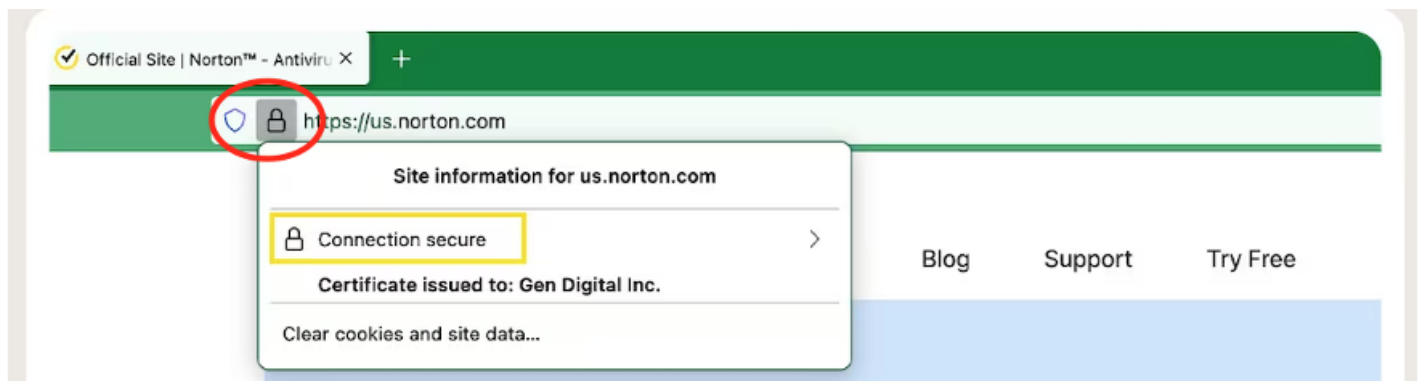
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# How To Know If the Website You're Visiting Is Safe



## Look for an SSL certificate.

An SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) is a digital certificate that certifies that a website is legitimate and that it offers encryption to protect personal information and financial data. For a site to have an SSL, they must prove to the issuer of the certificate that they are who they claim to be.



Checking to see if a website has an SSL is simple: look at the address bar when you visit a site. You should see:

**“https://” at the beginning of the URL. The “s” at the end of the http means “secure.”**

**A lock icon on the far-left side of the address bar.** This lock signifies a secure connection between you and the site. Click on the lock for more details about the website’s security.

If a site does not have an SSL, it does not necessarily mean it is unsafe. It could mean that it is OK to browse that site, but it may not be safe to share any personal information. By David B. Stellfox - *Geisinger Cybersecurity Training and Awareness Specialist*

# Homemade Ranch Dressing

Adapted from: myplate.gov

## Ingredients:

- 2 teaspoons dried, minced onions
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 cup plain, fat-free Greek yogurt
- 1 cup buttermilk (or for thicker ranch dip, substitute another cup of Greek yogurt for the buttermilk)

## Directions:

1. Add the dried onion, salt, garlic powder and dried parsley to a bowl, and stir gently to combine.
2. Add the Greek yogurt and buttermilk and stir until spices are evenly distributed.
3. Chill before serving. Refrigerate leftovers and use within one week.

\*Makes 16 servings.



# HCQU Announcement



Effective October 2024, the HCQU Healthy Outcomes Monthly eNewsletter will be offered quarterly:

- January (winter)
- April (spring)
- July (summer)
- October (fall)

Please visit the HCQU website for training events, announcements, and helpful resources.

**Are your new staff on the newsletter distribution list?**

[Email](#) us!



**Let the Central PA HCQU help you!**

Our HCQU includes registered nurses experienced in serving individuals with an Intellectual Disability (ID) and/or Autism and their support staff and families. Visit our [website](#) for their contact information, the counties they support and our upcoming trainings.