



Your Health

How to Find Trustworthy Sources

In the digital age, health information is more accessible than ever before.

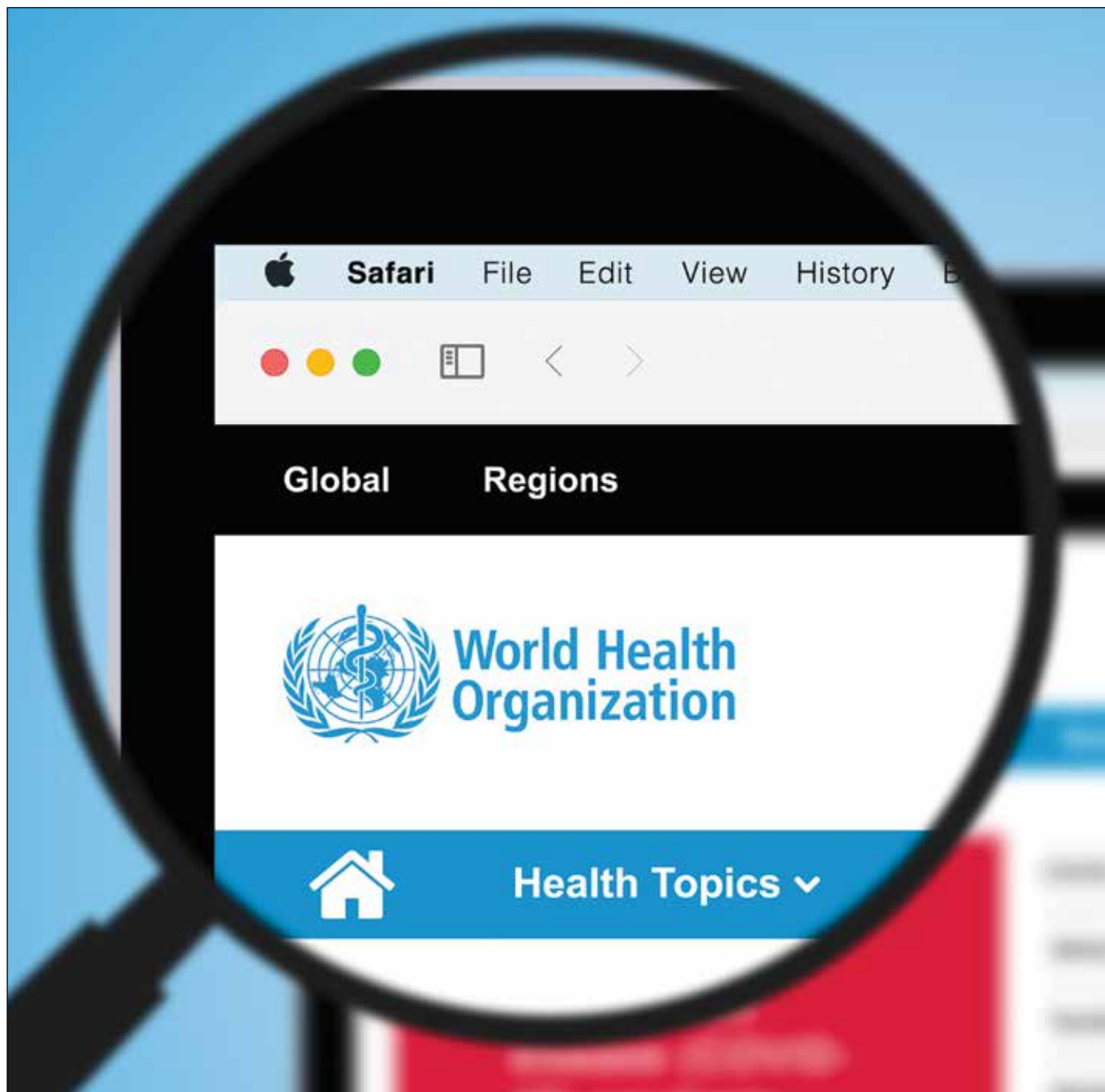
A quick internet search can yield thousands of results on any health topic, from common cold remedies to complex medical treatments.

However, not all health information online is reliable, and distinguishing between credible sources and misinformation can help you make informed decisions about your health. “Doctor Google” is not as reliable as an actual human doctor.

DANGERS OF MISINFORMATION

The sheer volume of health-related content on the internet can be overwhelming, and unfortunately, much of it is misleading or outright false. Inaccurate health information can lead to harmful self-diagnosis, improper treatment and increased anxiety. For instance, relying on unverified sources for serious conditions like heart disease or cancer could delay necessary medical intervention.

Misinformation is especially dangerous during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when false claims about treatments or vaccines spread quickly. The rise of social media has exacerbated this issue, as posts and videos promoting unproven remedies or conspiracy theories often gain wide circulation.



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IDENTIFYING TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES

When evaluating health information, consider the source. Reputable health organizations, government websites and peer-reviewed journals are typically the most reliable. Websites like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World

Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) offer evidence-based information that experts in the field regularly update.

Medical professionals and academic institutions are credible sources. Websites affiliated with hospitals, universities or healthcare providers often feature articles

written or reviewed by doctors, specialists or researchers. Look for information that cites studies published in reputable medical journals, such as “The New England Journal of Medicine” or “The Lancet.”

EVALUATING ONLINE HEALTH INFORMATION

When reading health information online, always check

the author’s credentials. Are they a licensed health care professional or an expert in the field? Be cautious of websites that lack transparency about their authors or do not clearly explain their qualifications.

Pay attention to tone and language. Trustworthy sources rely on facts and evidence, not fearmongering or sensational claims. If a website promises quick fixes, miracle cures or has a commercial interest in selling a product, it’s best to approach the information with skepticism.

Check the publication date, as health recommendations and guidelines can change over time. Outdated information may no longer be relevant or accurate, especially as new research and treatments emerge.

The National Library of Medicine offers a free tutorial on evaluating online health information at medlineplus.gov/webeval/EvaluatingInternetHealthInformationTutorial.pdf

CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL

Finally, while online research can provide helpful background information, it’s no substitute for professional medical advice.

Always consult with a health care provider before making decisions about your health, particularly when it comes to diagnosing conditions or starting new treatments.

How to Get Help

Domestic violence affects millions of people worldwide, often leaving victims physically and emotionally scarred.

While the immediate concern may be safety, the long-term health consequences of domestic violence can be severe.

The Centers for Disease Control defines intimate partner violence as including such behaviors as physical violence, sexual violence, stalking or psychological aggression. More than half of all female homicide victims are killed by a current or former male intimate partner. They also stress that it is preventable. It often starts in adolescence — which is dubbed “teen dating violence.”

The National Domestic Violence Hotline reports that an average of 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner, more than 12 million men and women each year.

HEALTH RISKS

The health effects of domestic violence can be profound, ranging from acute injuries to chronic conditions. Physically, victims may suffer broken bones, bruises and other injuries that require immediate medical attention. In some cases, domestic violence can lead to severe trauma, internal injuries or even death.

But the dangers are not limited to physical harm. The constant stress and fear can weaken the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses. Survivors of domestic violence, according to the hotline, are more than three times as likely to meet the criteria for PTSD, two times more likely to develop depression symptoms and three times more likely to have a major depressive episode. They are six times more likely to develop a substance abuse disorder.

Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to abuse can lead to heart disease, gastrointestinal disorders and chronic pain conditions.

HOW TO GET HELP

If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence situation, there are resources available. The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) provides 24/7 confidential support and guidance. Many communities offer local shelters and services where victims can seek refuge and begin the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

Develop a safety plan, which might include finding a safe place to stay, storing emergency funds, or discreetly packing essential items. Reaching out to friends, family members or trusted individuals can provide emotional support during this difficult time. Additionally, law enforcement agencies can assist by issuing protective orders and connecting victims with local resources.

For those in immediate danger, call 911.

RECOVERY AFTER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Recovering from domestic violence is a complex and ongoing process that involves healing physically and emotionally. Professional counseling can help survivors process the trauma and regain control over their lives. Support groups can provide a sense of community and shared experience.

Prioritize self-care. Engage in activities that promote mental and physical well-being, such as exercise, meditation or creative outlets. Reclaiming personal independence, whether



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through financial education or career development, is another important step toward long-term recovery.

Remember, there is help available. You don't have to face this alone, and recovery is possible.

Managing Life with OCD

While many people make jokes about obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), the symptoms aren't amusing to those who have to live with the condition.

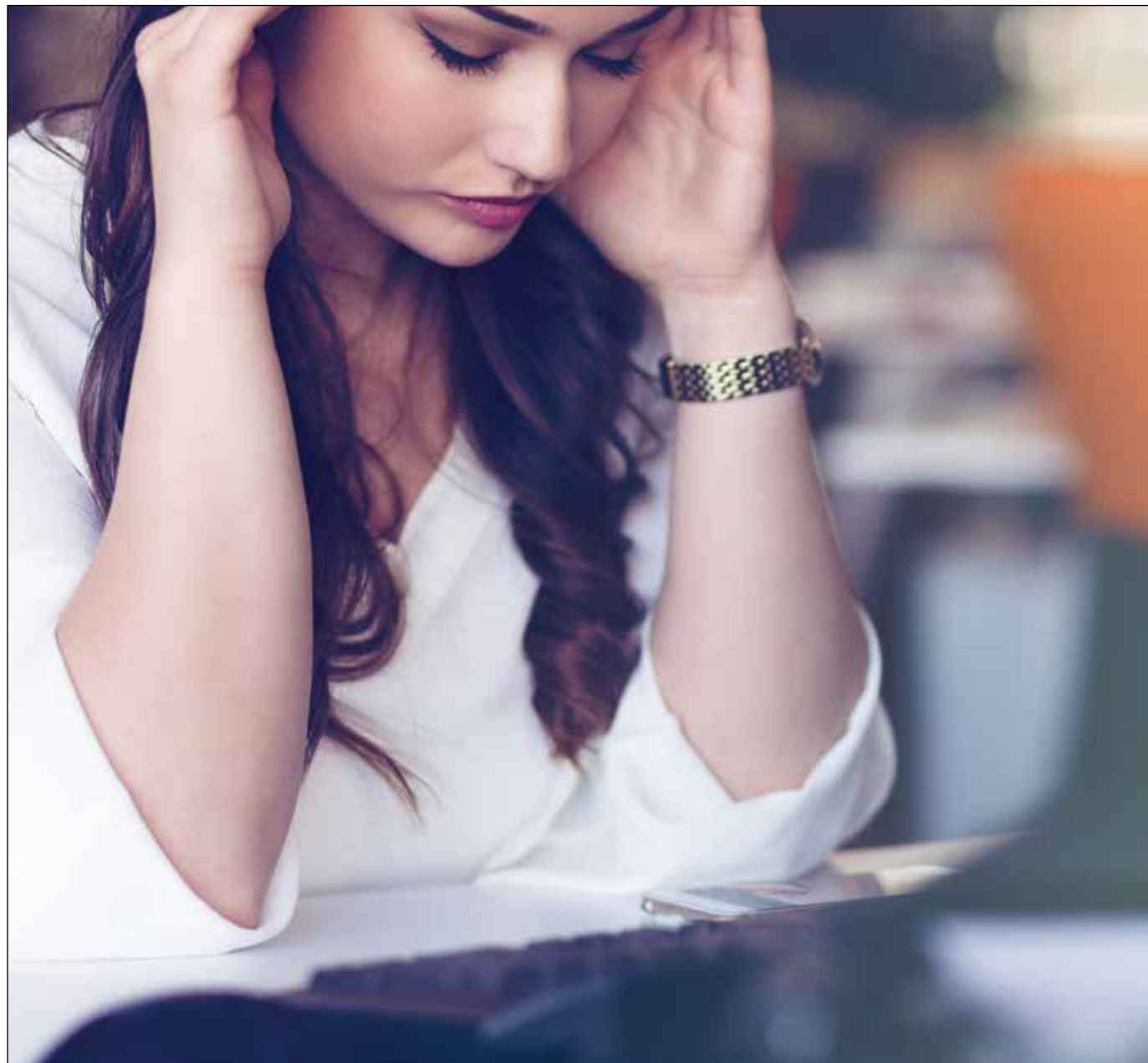
Thankfully, with the right coping strategies, those affected can learn to manage symptoms and lead fulfilling lives.

OCD is a chronic mental health condition characterized by unwanted, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions) aimed at relieving the anxiety those thoughts cause. While there is no cure, several approaches can help people cope with the daily challenges of OCD.

UNDERSTANDING OCD

OCD affects millions of people worldwide and can interfere with daily routines, relationships, and overall well-being. Individuals with OCD may experience compulsions like repeated handwashing, checking, or counting in an attempt to alleviate their obsessive thoughts. These rituals can become time-consuming, leading to stress and frustration.

Golden Steps ABA, an organization focused on autism, reports that OCD affects one in 40 adults with the average age of onset being 19. Women



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are more likely than men to have it and about one-third of the people who have OCD also have a tic disorder.

Because OCD is a complex disorder, it's important to work with healthcare professionals to develop a treatment plan tailored to individual needs. Most treatment plans include a combination of therapy, medication, and self-care strategies.

Golden Steps reports that

nearly one-third of people with OCD do not receive treatment. When it goes untreated, people with the condition are at higher risk for substance abuse, depression, eating disorders and anxiety disorders. The NIMH said that 76% of people with OCD have at least one other mental health disorder.

OCD can result from childhood trauma or genetic factors.

process can reduce the anxiety associated with obsessive thoughts and lessen the urge to perform rituals.

With the help of a therapist, individuals with OCD learn to confront their fears in a controlled and supportive environment. CBT can take time to show results, but can significantly improve quality of life.

MEDICATION

Medication can be a tool to manage OCD symptoms. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a class of antidepressants, are commonly prescribed to help regulate serotonin levels in the brain. For many individuals, SSRIs reduce the intensity of obsessive thoughts and compulsions, making it easier to engage in therapy.

It may take time to find the right dosage and medication that works best.

SELF-CARE AND COPING STRATEGIES

Coping strategies can help manage OCD symptoms. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, can reduce anxiety and help individuals stay grounded. Regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy diet also support mental well-being.

Building a support network is equally important. Sharing experiences with family, friends or support groups can ease feelings of isolation and provide emotional support.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

One of the most effective treatments for OCD is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), specifically a technique known as exposure and response prevention (ERP). ERP involves gradually exposing individuals to situations that trigger their obsessions while preventing them from engaging in compulsive behaviors. Over time, this

Meeting your Health Goals

Technology has transformed nearly every aspect of our lives, including the way we keep track of our health and wellness.

From fitness trackers to meal-planning apps, today's innovations make it easier than ever to set, monitor and achieve health goals. Whether you're aiming to lose weight, improve your mental health or stay active, here are just a few ways you can harness technology to meet your health objectives.

FITNESS TRACKERS AND SMARTWATCHES

Fitness trackers and smartwatches are among the most popular, new tools. These wearable devices monitor everything from steps and calories burned to heart rate and sleep quality. Some models even track oxygen levels, stress and other vital signs.

Setting daily goals — like walking 10,000 steps or burning a certain number of calories — can help you stay accountable. Many trackers allow you to set reminders to get moving if you've been inactive for too long. The data these devices collect can offer insights into your habits, helping you make informed decisions about your health.

NUTRITION AND MEAL-PLANNING APPS

Maintaining a balanced diet is key to any health goal, whether it's weight loss, muscle gain, or overall wellness. Nutrition and meal-planning apps like MyFitnessPal, Lose It!, and Noom allow users to log their meals, track calorie intake and monitor their macronutrients. Some apps even offer personalized meal plans and grocery lists based on dietary preferences and



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health goals.

By providing real-time feedback, these apps help you make better food choices and stick to your nutritional plan. Many allow you to scan barcodes or search databases for accurate food information, making it easier to track what you're eating.

TELEHEALTH SERVICES

Gone are the days when you had to visit a doctor's office for every health concern. Telehealth services have revolutionized the way we access healthcare, allowing anyone to consult with medical professionals from the comfort of their home. Whether you're

managing a chronic condition or seeking advice for a minor issue, virtual visits can help you stay on top of your health goals without the hassle of scheduling in-person appointments.

In addition to video calls, many telehealth platforms offer secure messaging with health care providers, making it easy to ask questions or get prescription refills without delay.

MENTAL HEALTH APPS

Numerous apps can help manage stress, anxiety and other mental health concerns. Apps like Calm, Headspace and Talkspace offer guided meditation, therapy sessions and mindfulness

exercises. By incorporating these tools into your routine, you can improve your mental well-being and reduce stress.

GOAL-SETTING PLATFORMS

Many fitness and wellness apps come with built-in communities and goal-setting features that allow users to connect with others who share similar objectives. Platforms like Strava, for example, let users track their workouts while interacting with others, creating a sense of community and competition. You can join challenges, share progress and encourage others, fostering motivation and accountability.

Pros and Cons of Bariatric Surgery

For people who struggle to lose weight, bariatric surgery can feel like a miracle procedure.

Bariatric surgery helps individuals with severe obesity lose weight by altering the digestive system. It's often recommended for those who have not been able to achieve significant weight loss through diet, exercise or medications. With obesity rates on the rise, bariatric surgery has become a common option for people looking to improve their health and quality of life.

TYPES OF BARIATRIC SURGERY

There are several types of bariatric surgery, the most common being gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy and adjustable gastric banding. Gastric bypass, one of the oldest procedures, involves creating a small pouch at the top of the stomach and rerouting the small intestine to this pouch. Sleeve gastrectomy reduces the size of the stomach by about 80%, limiting food intake. Adjustable gastric banding involves placing a band around the upper part of the stomach to create a smaller stomach pouch, though this procedure is now less common due to lower long-term success rates compared to other methods.

These surgeries restrict the amount of food the stomach can hold, leading to a



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significant reduction in calorie intake. Some procedures, like gastric bypass, also affect how the body absorbs nutrients.

WHO IS A CANDIDATE?

Bariatric surgery is typically recommended for people with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher or those with a BMI of 35 or higher who have serious obesity-related health issues. Candidates must commit to making lifestyle changes, including long-term dietary adjustments and regular physical activity.

Before surgery, patients undergo a thorough evaluation

to determine whether they are good candidates. This includes assessments by a surgeon, dietitian and sometimes a mental health professional to ensure the patient is prepared for the challenges of surgery and the post-surgical lifestyle changes.

BENEFITS

Bariatric surgery can lead to substantial weight loss, often 50-70% of excess body weight within the first two years after surgery. For many patients, this results in significant improvements in health. Weight loss can also lead to better mobility, increased energy levels and

improved quality of life.

The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery claims that bariatric surgery can reduce the risk of premature death by 30-50% and that it is safer than such surgeries as gallbladder surgery, appendectomy and knee replacement. They cite that many diseases go into remission with type 2 diabetes having a remission rate of 92%, hypertension 75% and obstructive sleep apnea 96%.

RISKS

As with any surgery, there are potential complications, including infection, blood clots

and adverse reactions to anesthesia. Long-term risks include nutrient deficiencies, especially after procedures like gastric bypass, where nutrient absorption is reduced. Patients must commit to lifelong vitamin and mineral supplementation to prevent deficiencies.

Bariatric surgery requires major lifestyle changes. Patients must follow strict dietary guidelines, starting with a liquid diet post-surgery and gradually reintroducing solid foods. Emotional and psychological support is often necessary, as adjusting to these changes can be challenging.

Seasonal Illnesses

As winter approaches, respiratory illnesses become more common.

Experts from John Hopkins Medicine explains that because people are indoors more, they spread viruses and cold, dry air can weaken resistance.

With the overlapping symptoms of various conditions, it can be difficult to tell them apart. John Hopkins lists several common winter respiratory concerns — the common cold, flu, COVID-19, RSV, acute and chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, and whooping cough. Here are some cues for recognizing them and taking steps to recover.

COMMON COLD

Symptoms: Sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and mild cough. Fever is rare.

What to do: Rest, stay hydrated and use over-the-counter (OTC) cold medications to ease symptoms. Colds typically last 7-10 days and don't require medical attention unless symptoms worsen.

INFLUENZA (FLU)

Symptoms: Sudden onset of fever, body aches, chills, fatigue, sore throat and dry cough. Flu can lead to serious complications like pneumonia.

What to do: Rest, hydrate, and take antiviral medication



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if prescribed by a doctor. If you are in a high-risk group — such as older adults, young children or those with underlying health conditions — seek medical attention for more severe symptoms or complications.

COVID-19

Symptoms: Similar to the flu but may also include loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath and gastrointestinal issues. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

What to do: Get tested if

you suspect COVID-19. Isolate for the recommended period, rest and monitor symptoms. Seek immediate medical help if you experience difficulty breathing or chest pain.

RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV)

Symptoms: RSV presents with cold-like symptoms in adults but can cause severe respiratory distress in infants, young children and older adults. Symptoms include runny nose, cough, wheezing and fever.

What to do: Mild cases resolve with rest and fluids, but more severe cases, particularly in children, may require hospitalization. Contact a health care provider if breathing difficulties arise.

ACUTE BRONCHITIS

Symptoms: Often starts with a cold or flu, then develops into a persistent cough with mucus production. Chest discomfort and mild shortness of breath may occur.

What to do: Most cases of acute bronchitis resolve on

their own. Rest, drink fluids and use cough suppressants or inhalers if recommended by your doctor. If symptoms persist or worsen, seek medical advice.

CHRONIC BRONCHITIS

Symptoms: Long-lasting cough with mucus that persists for at least three months in a year, often seen in smokers.

What to do: Chronic bronchitis requires medical management. Quitting smoking and using prescribed inhalers or bronchodilators can help manage symptoms.

PNEUMONIA

Symptoms: High fever, cough with mucus, sharp chest pain, and difficulty breathing.

What to do: Pneumonia can be life-threatening, especially for older adults or those with weakened immune systems. Seek medical attention promptly. Treatment typically includes antibiotics or antiviral medications, rest and fluids.

WHOOPING COUGH (PERTUSSIS)

Symptoms: Severe, prolonged coughing fits followed by a “whoop” sound, especially in children. It often starts with cold-like symptoms.

What to do: Whooping cough requires medical treatment. Antibiotics can help shorten the contagious period. Vaccination is key for prevention.

Caring for a Wound or Injury

From falling off a bike to cutting oneself in the kitchen, nearly everyone manages to injure themselves at some point in life.

Proper care can keep a minor ouchie from becoming a serious problem.

Caring for a wound or injury prevents infection, reduces pain and promotes faster healing. Whether it's a minor scrape, cut or a more serious injury, taking the right steps at home can make a big difference in recovery.

CLEAN THE WOUND

The first step is to clean the affected area thoroughly. Before touching the wound, wash your hands with soap and water to minimize the risk of infection. Wear gloves if you have them.

Rinse the wound with cool water to remove dirt, debris and bacteria. For smaller wounds, use a saline solution or mild soap. For deeper cuts or puncture wounds, avoid scrubbing, as this can damage the tissue and make things worse. Pat the area dry with a clean cloth or gauze pad.

If there is any debris (like gravel or glass) that won't wash out, seek medical attention. Attempting to remove deeply embedded debris could lead to further injury.

STOP THE BLEEDING

Most minor wounds will



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stop bleeding within a few minutes. If the wound is bleeding heavily, apply gentle but firm pressure with a clean bandage or cloth for 5-10 minutes. Elevating the wound above the level of your heart can also help slow the bleeding.

If the bleeding doesn't stop after 10 minutes of pressure or the wound continues to ooze blood, seek medical help immediately. This could indicate a more serious injury requiring professional treatment, such as stitches.

APPLY ANTIBIOTIC OINTMENT

Apply an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment like Neosporin to help reduce the risk of infection. A thin layer of ointment keeps the wound moist, which aids in the healing process.

However, some people may experience minor allergic reactions to these ointments, so if you notice increased redness, itching or swelling, discontinue use and consult a health care professional.

COVER AND PROTECT THE WOUND

Covering the area with a sterile bandage or adhesive dressing protects it from dirt and bacteria. Change the bandage daily, or more often if it becomes wet or dirty. Keeping the wound covered helps it heal faster by creating a moist environment, which promotes tissue growth and reduces scabbing.

For larger wounds or those in high-movement areas (like the hands or knees), non-stick gauze pads secured with

medical tape may provide better coverage. If you notice any signs of infection — such as redness, warmth, swelling or pus — seek medical advice.

MONITOR FOR INFECTION

Monitor the wound for signs of infection, which can occur even with proper care. Symptoms of an infected wound include increased redness around the area, warmth to the touch, a thick yellow or green discharge and worsening pain or swelling.

If you develop a fever or notice red streaks spreading from the wound, seek immediate medical attention, as these are signs of a serious infection.

LET THE WOUND BREATHE

While it's important to keep wounds covered in the initial stages, allow the wound to air out for short periods once healing is underway. This helps dry the wound and promotes the formation of new skin. However, don't leave the wound uncovered for too long, as this can expose it to bacteria and dirt, especially in the first few days.

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

Some wounds require medical attention beyond at-home care. Seek medical help if the wound is deep, longer than half an inch, caused by a dirty or rusty object or if you haven't had a tetanus shot in the past five years. Also, if a wound is on the face or another sensitive area, it may need professional treatment to minimize scarring.