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## Safe travels

COVID has changed many things in recent years, including the way we travel. No one wants to end up sick on vacation or pass an infection to those around them. Thankfully, there are ways to make travel safer for everyone. A few simple precautions are all it takes.

- Get updated on your vaccines, including COVID and any specific vaccines recommended by your destination country.
- Check the COVID situation at your destination. If community spread is high, you may want to take extra precautions.
- Find out if there are any testing, vaccine, or other documentation requirements at any stage of your journey.
- While masks are not required everywhere, the CDC recommends masking up on public transportation.
- Consider getting a COVID test when you return if you were in an area with a high risk of exposure.
- Be patient and flexible. Everyone wants to get to their destination safely.

# Stop snoring



Almost everyone snores sometimes. But some people snore a lot, and it may be disruptive to their sleep and those around them. Snoring may just be a nuisance, but it could also be a sign of a serious problem.

## WHAT IS SNORING?

Snoring is the harsh sound made when air vibrates the tissue around your airway while you breathe. When you sleep, it's normal for your throat to relax and your tongue to slide back into your mouth. However, if anything obstructs the flow of air, you get vibrations known as snoring.

The sound can range from gentle to grating, depending on the degree of obstruction or the specific structure of your airway.

## CAUSES

- Stuffy nose from a cold or allergies
- Sleep position
- Bulky throat tissue from large tonsils or adenoids
- Your unique mouth anatomy
- Being overweight
- Poor muscle tone due to age, alcohol consumption, or sleep deprivation
- A serious condition called Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)

## What makes snoring dangerous?



Excessive snoring may be a sign of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). This condition occurs when breathing is fully or partially obstructed for more than 10 seconds during sleep. You may wake with a snort or gasp and then fall back to sleep for another cycle of snoring, followed by breath obstruction.

People with OSA often sleep poorly due to multiple cycles of apnea disrupting deep sleep. They are also at higher risk for high blood pressure, heart conditions, and stroke.

Talk to your doctor if you or your partner notice you are frequently snoring.

Warning signs for OSA:

- Feeling very drowsy during the day
- Morning headaches
- Gasping or choking at night
- High blood pressure
- Snoring disrupting your bed partner's sleep
- Chest pain at night

If your doctor determines you do not have OSA, you may want to try other strategies to reduce snoring:

- Sleep on your side.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine at night.
- Lose some weight.
- Treat nasal congestion.
- Try devices such as nasal strips or nasal dilators.
- Explore ways to get better sleep.

# Understanding autoimmunity

The immune system is a finely tuned network of organs and cells that protect you. When the body senses a threat, such as an injury, bacteria, or virus, the immune system swings into action. An autoimmune disease occurs when the immune system mistakenly targets your own tissues, causing damage.



## COMMON AUTOIMMUNE CONDITIONS

- Type 1 diabetes
- Lupus
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Graves' disease
- Hashimoto's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Psoriasis
- Celiac disease
- Alopecia areata

## SYMPTOMS

The specific symptoms vary by type of autoimmune condition. However, many autoimmune diseases share some common symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Redness and swelling
- Muscle aches
- Low-grade fevers
- Symptoms that come and go, called flares and remission



## CAUSES

No one knows exactly why some people develop an autoimmune disease. However, they are more common in some groups of people:

- Women are more likely than men to develop an autoimmune condition.
- Genetics may predispose a person to certain autoimmune diseases.
- Exposure to certain viruses, bacteria, or chemicals may trigger an autoimmune reaction.
- Some autoimmune disorders are more common among certain racial or ethnic groups.

## TREATMENT

Your doctor is your best resource to properly diagnose and treat autoimmune diseases. The exact treatment depends on the type of autoimmune condition, the areas of the body affected, and your own health and medical history.

Treatment goals include:

- Suppress or slow down the immune system to prevent it from damaging tissues.
- Control symptoms, including pain, inflammation, rash, etc.
- Replace any substances your body can no longer make, for example, insulin if you have type 1 diabetes.

# Improve your home

Owning a home is a big investment. Regular maintenance and improvement projects help protect your asset and keep it in top condition. These home projects are the best bang for your buck.



## FRESHEN UP THE PAINT

A new coat of paint, both inside and out, can make your home look up to date and appealing. It's an inexpensive way to transform any room, and it's easy to do yourself.



## INSTALL CROWN MOLDING

This task takes a bit of know-how, but it's a simple cosmetic improvement that boosts the appearance of the interior. Crown molding makes rooms look pulled together and complete.



## UPDATE FIXTURES

Outlet covers, switch plates, light fixtures, and door knobs are simple to replace and make great finishing touches. These minor details really stand out.



## KITCHEN CABINETS

Kitchen remodels are one of the priciest home upgrades. If that is outside your budget, don't worry. Instead, refresh your existing kitchen cabinets with a more modern paint color or stain.



## REPLACE FRONT DOOR

Your front door can make a big statement. If the door is worn out, old, or just plain boring, replace it with one that has a fresh, updated color.



## CLEAN UP THE LANDSCAPING

The exterior of your home is the first thing people see. A well-cared-for yard and tidy landscaping set the tone for everything else. Keep planting beds free of weeds and well-mulched.