

Patient Portals 101



Want faster access to your health care provider?

Patient portals enhance and quicken communication between you and your medical care team. Portals also allow secure electronic access to your personal health information. If your provider offers a patient portal, make the most of this valuable health tool. Portals are especially useful when you develop a chronic condition that needs regular care.

Getting started: Initially, your clinic will likely send an email giving you an option to log in to and set up your portal. The portal's message center allows you to communicate electronically with your provider and the office staff, who can then send you various notices, such as test results and reminders for annual checkups and flu shots. **Note:** If you've not received notification to access a portal service, contact your clinic.

Once you're set up, you can receive email alerts to visit your portal for new messages. In addition, the portal allows you to perform many basic health care tasks. You can:

- **Make** non-urgent appointments.
- **Review** your medical history.
- **Request** referrals.
- **Refill** prescriptions.
- **Download** and complete forms.
- **Access** educational materials.
- **Send** questions via secure email.

Some portals work better than others.

Report problems or suggestions to your website providers; they want to ensure their portals are effective and efficient for their patients.

Using a portal service can lead to better care and easier care management. Are you on it?

“In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: It goes on. — *Robert Frost*



Portals can often save you time and effort.

You can often resolve basic issues without waiting for office hours or returned phone calls; you can access your personal health information from each of your providers; and if you have multiple providers or see specialists regularly, they can securely post online notices to your portal.

BEST bits

Q&A: COVID-19

Read about the current facts regarding coronavirus.

Note: Due to the quickly changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, check for daily updates at the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov).



April marks Testicular Cancer Awareness Month,

an event sponsored by the Testicular Cancer Society that promotes the need for awareness throughout the year, particularly among young men. Facts: While testicular cancer is rare, it is the most common cancer in American males ages 15 to 35. Testicular cancer is highly treatable, even when cancer has spread beyond the testicle. Learn more at [testicularcancersociety.org](https://www.testicularcancersociety.org).



Defend against cancer. You

can significantly reduce your risk for many types of cancer by practicing some basic preventive measures: Lose excess weight; stay physically active; eat high-fiber foods and at least 2½ cups of fruits and vegetables daily; don't use tobacco; and avoid heavy alcohol use. During Cancer Awareness Month, review the wealth of cancer prevention tips at [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).



Working on a Remote Team

With the spread COVID-19, more of the U.S. workforce is working remotely than in the past.

Remote work comes with challenges as well as benefits. The goal is to create a team culture and maintain positive working relationships, even if you rarely meet face-to-face. To make remote teamwork more productive:

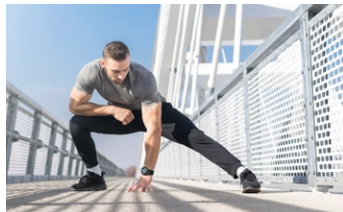
Make it visual. Remote workers often miss the important visual, non-verbal communication cues that come across during in-person meetings. As much as possible, use online video chat and videoconferencing tools. That way, you can look each other in the eye and have more productive conversations.

Build relationships. Find creative ways to get to know each other personally, so your team relationships grow strong. Share photos electronically, play an online trivia game together, or ask one team member to share details about themselves each week. Set up team interactions that are about fun and socializing, as well as work.



Speak up. Reach out to team members for help, information sharing, and to ask questions. It's all too easy to work in isolation when you are a remote worker. Take every opportunity to connect and work together, so you perform better as a team.

QuikQuiz™: Fitness IQ



It's easy to confuse fact with fiction about how to get in shape.
All sorts of dos and don'ts for fitness and weight loss abound online.

- Getting in shape requires long workouts.
 True False
- Exercise is not just about weight control.
 True False
- You don't need to warm up your muscles before you work out.
 True False
- Certain healthy foods, such as celery and lettuce, help you lose weight because they have negative calories.
 True False

Answers

1. False — Just 10-minute spurts of activity 3 times a day for 5 days a week build fitness, according to the NIH.

2. True — Exercise also helps reduce stress, improve mood and enhance your sleep. It also lowers your risk of developing chronic disease.

3. False — Warm up your muscles with low-intensity activities for 5 to 10 minutes before any vigorous activity. Stretch gently at the end of vigorous activity and after cool down to reduce strain.

4. False — All foods have calories. However, eating lots of vegetables is a healthy habit, and the fiber helps you stay full and satisfied, so you're less likely to snack all day long.

QuikRisk™ Assessment: Alcohol Use

You don't have to be an alcoholic to suffer from drinking too much. Alcohol abuse means you're drinking enough to cause ongoing health, safety and social problems. If you think you drink too much, you probably do.

Alcohol Awareness Month was established in 1987 by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, which offers the following self-assessment.

Check the following statements that apply to you:

- You avoid family and friends because of your drinking.
- You drink to suppress negative emotions, such as stress, disappointment and anger.
- Your tolerance for alcohol has increased significantly since you first began to drink.
- You have experienced blackouts due to your drinking, making you unable to recall part of the previous period when you drank.
- When drinking with friends, you attempt to have extra drinks when others aren't looking.
- You feel emotionally rushed to drink the first drink of the day.
- You feel guilt and shame because of your drinking.
- Friends and family have expressed concern about your drinking.
- You keep drinking even when friends or family have stopped drinking.
- You feel anxious when alcohol is not accessible to you, even for just a few hours.

Bottom line: Checking even a few of these statements indicates a high risk for alcohol addiction. Don't delay confiding in your health care provider, who can help you understand your drinking and its broad effects, and discuss your treatment options.

Successful Retirement Planning



Enjoying financial security during retirement takes investment planning and action.

For a financially successful retirement, you must build enough savings and investments to supplement other sources of income (such as Social Security). Social Security is no longer enough to cover expenses in later years.

To make sure you save enough, here are some basic steps to consider:

1. Start early and save continuously at least the amount required to obtain the full matching contribution in a tax-sheltered employer-sponsored plan. **Remember:** Compound interest is your friend. The earlier you begin saving, the better off you will be. Also, don't forget to increase your savings as your income rises.

2. Diversify your portfolio through mutual plans and limit company stock to no more than 10%. Accept enough risk to meet your retirement needs.

3. Contribute to ROTH IRAs to supplement your employer-sponsored plan.

4. Hands off your retirement. Do not borrow against it; do not withdraw from it. When changing jobs, roll over the funds into the new employer's plan or a rollover IRA.

5. Pay attention to your investment account fees. Make sure your returns aren't being eaten away by charges.

Go on a Food Adventure

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

There's no single food that contains all of the nutrients you need for optimal health.

That's why you'll notice that healthy plate models always have proportions of different foods, such as ½ vegetables and fruits, ¼ grains and ¼ protein-rich options (e.g., lean poultry and meat, fish and beans). When eaten daily, the right proportion of these foods can help ensure you get the nutrients your body requires.

Some people use a plate model and fill it with the same choices day after day. That's fine, as long as you get the nutrients you need. Others are more adventurous eaters and love to experiment with different flavors from around the world. Neither is right or wrong. What counts are balance, variety and your personal taste.

And don't shy away from being adventurous. Here are 5 food trends to keep on your must-try radar:

• **Fermented drinks**, such as kombucha and kefir, contain healthy probiotic bacteria that are good for overall health. Experiment with different brands, or make your own at home.



• **At-home meal kits** allow you to bring global flavors into your kitchen. Your local supermarket now likely stocks pre-prepped ingredient kits (think chicken, vegetables, noodles and sauce) to make a delicious dinner at home. Or check for other delivery services in your area.



• **Puffed snacks** are a modern take on the cheese variety but are made with whole grains, vegetables and flavors, such as curry or quinoa and kale. They are still ultra-processed snacks but with less salt and fat than chips.

• **New nut butters** beyond peanut or almond butter are gaining momentum. Look for macadamia butter and roasted pumpkin seed butter.



• **Burger blends** allow consumers to choose burgers that blend beef with plant-based foods, such as mushrooms or black beans. You get the same meaty taste with a new approach to a classic comfort food.



One-Pan Mediterranean Chicken

EASY recipe

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 tbsp olive oil | 1 zucchini, 1-inch diced |
| 2 cloves garlic, chopped | 2 cups mini tomatoes |
| 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice | 1 yellow or orange pepper, 1-inch diced |
| 1 tsp dried oregano | 1 red onion, 1-inch diced |
| ½ tsp salt | ¼ cup feta cheese, crumbled |
| 4 skinless boneless chicken breasts (about 16 oz.) | |



In a container with a lid, mix together oil, garlic, lemon juice, oregano and salt. **Add** chicken, stir to coat and marinate in the refrigerator for 2 hours (or overnight). **Preheat** oven to 450°F. **Line** a baking sheet with foil. **Add** chicken to baking sheet and surround with zucchini, tomatoes, peppers and onions. **Bake** 25-30 minutes (until the chicken is 165°F). **Sprinkle** with feta cheese and serve warm.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving:

263 calories | 27g protein | 9g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 6g mono fat | 1g poly fat
13g carbohydrate | 2g sugar | 3g fiber | 477mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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EXPERT advice

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

April is Occupational Therapy
(OT) Awareness Month.



Q: What is occupational therapy?

A: OT is a licensed profession that uses everyday activities, or occupations, to help people perform everyday functions they want and need to do.

Occupational therapists determine and design customized therapeutic programs of daily activities to help patients reach their personal goals at home and at work. OT's

science-based treatments have been shown to increase the capacity for patient self-care and independence and reduce health care costs.

Specifically, OT can help people regain function after an illness, injury or limitation makes it difficult to engage in daily activities. The therapy can aid injury recovery, stroke or cancer rehabilitation, speech or swallowing technique, and arthritis or disability retraining. In addition, diabetes or obesity management, support for older adults with physical or cognitive impairments, and accommodations for children with disabilities may benefit from the expertise of an occupational therapist.



TIP of the MONTH New Foods and Kids

Children may need to taste a new food 15 to 20 times before deciding if they like it. Researchers have found that the best way to introduce kids to new foods is to offer repeat exposure to them, and to be a role model by eating them yourself. And what if they just don't like something? That's okay. There are probably certain foods that you don't like either, right? The best approach is no pressure.



SAFETY corner

In a Flash

When a flash flood warning occurs in your area, move to higher ground and follow any evacuation orders.

General safety guidelines:

- ✓ **Learn what to do** in the event of a flash flood.
- ✓ **Create an evacuation plan** if you live in a flash flood zone.
- ✓ **Maintain an emergency kit**; check it frequently to ensure you have what you need. Visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) to see what your kit should contain.
- ✓ **Listen to local media for instructions during flooding.** Stay away from flood waters, and keep children and pets away from water.
- ✓ **Be especially cautious at night**, when you can't always see rising waters.
- ✓ **Be aware that flash floods sometimes happen without warning.** If you are driving and the road becomes flooded, turn around. Don't attempt to go through the flooded area; even 6 inches of water will cause loss of control. Two feet of water can sweep most vehicles away.

If you are caught in rapidly rising water, get out of the car if it's safe to do so, and move to higher ground. If your vehicle is caught and moving, try to get on the roof of your vehicle until help arrives.