

# Fortify for Fall

By Ted R. Borgstadt

Fall has always been my favorite season: the excitement of college football on a crisp Saturday afternoon, the local pumpkin festival, trick or treaters knocking on my door, and my mom and I making apple butter together on my screened porch. I love these annual fall traditions.

But, I am starting to wonder, *will I be able to enjoy these traditions this year?*

The first wave of COVID-19 seems to still be running amuck and not slowing down. I am trying to wrap my mind around how a second wave may hit this fall/winter, but doesn't that imply the first wave is over?

My concerns about the ability to give friends my mom's apple butter at Christmas quickly fade to greater worries for the months ahead. Will a second wave along with the regular flu season overwhelm our health system? How do we control the life-threatening effects of COVID-19 before a vaccine is available? What more can be done to keep us healthy, safe and sane?

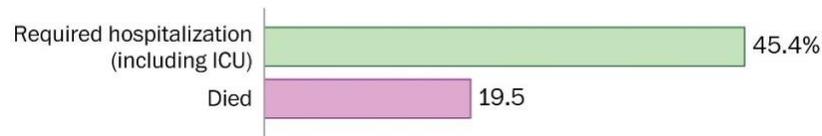
Our understanding of COVID-19 is limited but expanding. One of the few insights agreed upon by the scientific world, as well as both sides of the political aisle, is that people who are obese, have a chronic disease, smoke, or are over the age of 65 are in a higher risk category for life-threatening complications from COVID-19. According to the CDC, those with underlying health conditions are at a much greater risk of hospitalization and death. The startling reality is that 3 out of 4 adults in this country have one or more of these high-risk factors.



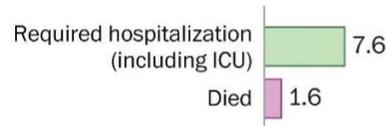
## Those with underlying health conditions are much more vulnerable to covid-19

Conditions include heart disease, chronic lung disease and diabetes.

### Among patients with reported underlying health conditions



### Among patients without underlying health conditions



Source: CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, June 15.  
SHELLY TAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

There is much about COVID-19 we can't control, but there are things each of us can do to provide more protection against a second wave. We can take steps today to fortify ourselves and our families, and remind ourselves that we are not without hope.

The word fortify means “to protect or strengthen against attack.” We have just a few months until fall/winter. A few short months to strengthen and protect ourselves against a potential second attack of COVID-19. Fortify your family, *Fortify for Fall*.

In a few months you can significantly improve your health and reduce your compounding COVID-19 risk factors. With a little help, you can lose that extra 25 lbs. or quit smoking cigarettes for good. You can actually follow through with the instructions your doctor has given you over the years. There is a path forward to change, regardless of your mental or physical condition today.

Most often, it is not a lack of knowledge or understanding that keeps us from successfully changing difficult health behaviors. We know what our doctor has asked us to do but knowing for a lot of us is not enough to ensure we will change. For most of us, making a change and sustaining that change is a struggle. Sometimes it is difficult to nail down why changing behavior is so hard, it always seems like something else gets in the way.

The “something else” issue for each of us is different. We each have our own set of unique circumstances, problems, hang-ups, pride, mental blocks, fears, restrictions, joys, dreams, passions, regrets and relationship issues. Our lives tend to be messy, so if you are waiting for the messiness to clear up, you may be waiting a long time. *What if there was a way to change behavior even in the midst of our unique and ever evolving messiness of life?*

So, it begs the question, “how do I get started to Fortify for Fall?”

## Understand and Co-Exist with Your Stuff

### 1. Evaluate

Take an honest evaluation of your own stuff. This stuff is what is unique to you. It is what helps make you, well, you. Some of your stuff that may be directly in your sight each day, so it is pretty easy to identify. An example of the obvious stuff might be that you put off doing things you need to do; you are a procrastinator. There is also the stuff that may be lurking down deep and is less obvious, yet it just may be the stuff that affects your ability to be successful short-term and long-term with your health goals. An example of the less obvious stuff is pride.

### 2. Plan and embrace

Next, think about how to strategically plan to move forward in the midst of your stuff, not in avoidance of your stuff. Accept that life is messy. **It is time to embrace your identified stuff that makes and keeps your life messy.** Then, take the time to creatively think about how you can co-exist with your stuff by making an adjustment or two that will allow you to move forward with starting to make the changes you need to make.

For example, if you are obese and you struggle with pride, then you may want to start walking in the neighborhood early in the morning before the sun comes up and before the neighbors are out. Your pride gets a breather and your body gets some exercise. Win-win.

## Multiple Goals Together

### 3. Make a List

Make a list with two columns:

1. Health changes you and your family need and want to make
2. Changes you need to make but don't want to make

Both lists are important to understand and will take different strategies to succeed. Working on goal areas from both columns at the same time is key. *(No cherry-picking only the goals you are really hyped to get started on!)* The secret to creating lasting behavior change is to match each goal with your level of motivation for that specific goal. For the goals you are less motivated to work on, set a mini-goal.

Example: If you hate to eat vegetables, your goal should *not* be: eat three servings of vegetables a day for the next week.



A more appropriate mini-goal might be: Read three articles on why vegetables are good for you. Then list why you would or wouldn't eat more of them. *What do you gain by eating them or not eating them?* A pretty fun exercise to get you thinking differently before you set a goal to actually eat more vegetables.

For the goals you are hyped to get started on, be a little more aggressive and allow yourself a larger goal. Goals are meant to be tried on for size. If your eyes were bigger than your stomach and you dialed-up too large a goal, then step it back a notch or two.

## **Take Advantage of Available Resources**

### **4. Resource Inventory**

Take an inventory of all free resources you may have to help you, such as programs offered through your company's health benefits, or community exercise and nutrition programs.

*Don't forget:* family walks in your neighborhood/local park or increasing repetitions of the tried-and-true push-ups and sit-ups. Simple suggestions, but they will work to help you begin to Fortify for Fall. *Bonus:* If you also eat healthier, you'll see measurable impact in just weeks. Pretty simple encouragement, but effective.

*Tip:* Tell your neighbor what you're doing when you're outside getting exercise. Accountability is usually helpful.

## **You Can Do This**

Fall and winter are but a few short months away. How fortified you and your family will be is truly in your hands. You can do this. And we all need to do this. If enough families, in enough neighborhoods, in enough communities Fortify for Fall, then we have a shot at protecting and strengthening ourselves and our communities against a possible second attack of COVID-19.

“All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in this world, is for enough good men and women to do nothing.” - Edmund Burke

Do something. FORTIFY for Fall.

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*To learn more about Fortify for Fall, please call 479-582-0777.*