

Make Mother's Day last all year with wellness and appreciation

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It wouldn't be Mother's Day without flowers and a messy breakfast in

bed. But is there more we can do for mom's long-term benefit, and perhaps even for motherhood in general?

There surely is, experts say, and it doesn't have to cost a lot of money. As May 10 approaches, here are a few things to keep in mind.

"My kids are always asking me what they should do for Mother's Day," said Dr. Norrina Bai Allen, associate professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. She specializes in cardiovascular epidemiology.

"I like to have a mix of family time and peace and quiet," said Allen, whose five children range from 18 months to 10 years. "So, we'll try and do something as a family, go out for a walk or make breakfast together.

"Then they'll go off and make dinner, and I'll have some time alone to reflect on the things that bring me peace and joy."

That's where the health aspect comes in. In a world where mom's tasks and responsibilities may seem never-ending, time and appreciation may be the greatest gifts.

"There's a lot of discussion in the cardiovascular world about the importance of bringing mindfulness and calm into our daily lives," Allen said. "That can reduce [stress](#), which reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease as well, which is probably driven by the fact that you make healthier choices."

Stress is commonly accepted as a risk factor for [heart disease](#) and it can contribute to other [risk factors](#) such as [high blood pressure](#), smoking and poor eating habits.

A supportive family, Allen said, can be a key to [good health](#).

"Getting feedback from our kids and family members about just how important you are in their lives can be really impactful," she said. "Being connected to the people you love and having a sense of purpose can be really impactful for our health and well-being as well."

But that's not a one-day proposition.

"I love Mother's Day and getting spoiled by my [family](#)," said Diana Spalding, digital education editor at the lifestyle website Motherly. She is co-author of the new book, "The Motherly Guide to Becoming Mama."

"But it comes and goes, and then what? Can we have a discussion about how not to wait another 364 days before we can make you feel special again?"

Spalding, a midwife in suburban Philadelphia and mother of three young children, said her website celebrates motherhood, but also focuses on "the mental load and the burnout that's happening for a lot of moms, especially now during the pandemic."

Her idea for gifts that keep on giving start with looking at how families can lighten that load "and let mom know how much she's appreciated all year."

The best observance of Mother's Day, Spalding said, can have a broader perspective.

"It's great to do something special for the mom in your life," she said. "But it always feels important to me to do a micro version of Mother's Day at home and a macro version, too."

By that she means getting involved in issues such as paid leave for new

parents, affordable childcare and maternal mortality rates that are among the highest in the developed world—and more than twice as high for black women than white women.

"Maybe donate to a charity or write a few letters to your representative about an issue that speaks to you," Spalding said. "I don't want to bring down the joy of Mother's Day. Breakfast in bed and bubble baths and all that good stuff are amazing. But it's also a chance to reflect about what we can do better for mothers everywhere."

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