

HOW TO PREPARE FOR COLD & FLU SEASON

Environmental & Occupational Safety

EASY STEPS TO PREVENTION & ACTION

Studies show that the average person contracts about three colds per year, and those who are in contact with young children get even more. While there's no cure for the common cold or the flu, you can take measures to protect yourself.



Know the Difference

Know the difference between a cold and the flu (see guide, right). A cold can last two or three weeks; most people are better within seven to ten days. On the other hand, without proper care or attention, a flu virus can lead to bronchitis or pneumonia, each of which can cause permanent health damage. Each year, more than 100,000 people in the United States are hospitalized and about 36,000 die due to the flu and its complications.

Wash Your Hands

Wash your hands. Frequent washing with warm water and ordinary soap for 20 seconds is one of the simplest and most effective ways to avoid catching a cold or the flu. Use antibacterial alcohol-based foams and gels when you don't have access to soap and water.

Disinfect

Disinfect your home regularly. Spray the surfaces in your bathroom and kitchen with a mild solution of 2 to 5 percent bleach in water to kill viruses and bacteria.

Get Vaccinated

Get a flu vaccination if you're in a high-risk population: (a) Adults over the age of 65. (b) Adults and children with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, emphysema and kidney disease. (c) Pregnant women who will be in the second or third trimester of their pregnancy during the flu season. (d) People with weakened immune systems, such as HIV-positive individuals or cancer patients who are undergoing chemotherapy.



October, 1, 2007

IF IT IS A COLD

- Fevers are rare in adults & older children, but can be as high as 102 degrees in infants & smaller children.
- Rarely have headaches.
- Muscle aches, tiredness & weakness are mild.
- There is Never extreme exhaustion.
- Often a runny nose, sneezing, sore throat.
- Mild coughing that can move to a hacking cough and may worsen.



IF IT IS THE FLU

- Fevers typically around 102 degrees, but can go up to 104 or higher— usually lasting 3-4 days.
- Sudden onset of headaches and can be severe.
- Often see muscle aches, can be severe.
- Tiredness & weakness can last up to 2 or more weeks.
- Extreme exhaustion can have a sudden onset and may be severe.
- Will sometimes see runny nose, sneezing, and/ or coughing.
- Will usually experience coughing— but it can become severe.

http://www.ehow.com/how_136771_prepare-cold-flu.html



EASY STEPS TO PREVENTION & ACTION (CONT)

Vaccination Knowledge

The vaccine is made with a killed virus that cannot give you the flu. Vaccines are not 100 percent effective, so you may still get a less severe case of the flu after receiving the vaccine. The vaccine takes about two weeks to become fully effective in your body, so prepare yourself before the season hits.

Diet & Exercise

Eat a well-balanced diet. It's essential to building a healthy immune system, and it provides sources of energy and nutrition for optimal growth and development. Taking a daily multivitamin-- especially when you're fatigued or stressed-- also helps ensure that you will receive an adequate dose of minerals and vitamins. Drink water every day. Staying hydrated is essential to your health. Water helps your body assimilate nutrients and convert food into energy. Water also helps flush out impurities of your body. Exercise regularly. 30 minutes of moderate exercise, such as walking, helps boost your metabolism and your body's ability to fight disease.

Rest

Get plenty of rest. On average, humans require seven to eight hours of sleep every night. Lack of sleep can lower the immune system's ability to react when needed. Without sufficient sleep, the immune system is hard-pressed to keep up with its nightly repair work, and creates an opening for opportunistic diseases.

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RESPIRATORY HYGIENE & COUGH ETIQUETTE

The concepts of respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette involve using source control measures to prevent respiratory infections from infecting others. These measures include :

- Cover mouth & nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of used tissue in waste containers .
- Perform hand hygiene (wash with soap and warm water for 20 seconds or clean hands with alcohol-based hand product if hands are not visibly soiled) after contact with respiratory secretions .
- Stand or sit at least 3 feet from other persons, if possible.
- If you have a respiratory infection or any kind of cough, be sure to carry tissues and Alcohol-based hand rub and/or hand washing supplies (soap and water, clean towels) with you.



<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/avian/hcp/standard.html>