



Easy precautions can prevent cold and flu

Schools and offices are some of the easiest places to catch and spread winter illnesses like cold and flu. Because there are usually a lot of people in a close environment without a lot of fresh air (it's winter and cold outside, after all!), if one person gets sick, it won't be long before others are coughing and sneezing too. This year, take these steps to help keep yourself and your co-workers healthier by taking steps to prevent and treat winter illnesses.

Call in sick when needed. Viruses are easy to spread in close quarters like offices. Stay home if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Cough or sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea



Get a flu shot. The most effective time to get vaccinated is the end of October, since the vaccine takes up to two weeks to become fully effective. If you missed that window, it's still worth getting a flu shot as soon as you can. By getting one, you're not only protecting yourself, but limiting the risk of contracting the flu for those around you. Flu vaccines are available in doctors offices, clinics, pharmacies, and even some grocery stores.



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Treat yourself: at home remedies for winter illnesses

Despite your best efforts, did you get sick anyway? There's no magic cure for winter illnesses, but some of these easy home remedies will make you feel a little better.

Stay warm and rested. Staying warm and resting when you first come down with a cold or the flu helps your body direct its energy toward the immune battle taxing the body.

Treat a stuffy nose with warm salt water. Salt-water rinsing helps break nasal congestion, while removing virus particles and bacteria from your nose. Here's a popular recipe: *Mix ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon baking soda in 8 ounces of warm water. Use a bulb syringe or nasal irrigation kit to squirt water into the nose. Hold one nostril closed with light finger pressure while squirting the salt mixture into the other nostril. Let it drain. Repeat two to three times, then treat the other nostril.*

Drink hot liquids. Hot liquids relieve nasal congestion, prevent dehydration, and soothe the uncomfortably inflamed membranes that line your nose and throat. If you're so congested that you can't sleep at night, try a hot toddy, an age-old remedy. Make a cup of hot herbal tea. Add one



teaspoon of honey and one small shot (about 1 ounce) of whiskey or bourbon. Limit yourself to one. Too much alcohol will inflame the membranes and make you feel worse.

Take a steamy shower. Steamy showers moisturize your nasal passages and may help you relax. If you're dizzy, run a steamy shower while you sit on a chair nearby and take a sponge bath.

Eat infection-fighting foods. Here are some good foods to eat when you're battling a cold or flu:

- Bananas and rice to soothe an upset stomach and curb diarrhea
- Vitamin C-containing foods like bell peppers
- Blueberries curb diarrhea and are high in natural aspirin, which may lower fevers and help with aches and pains
- Chili peppers may open sinuses, and help break up mucus in the lungs
- Cranberries may help prevent bacteria from sticking to cells lining the bladder and urinary tract
- Mustard or horseradish may help break up mucus in air passages
- Onions contain phytochemicals purported to help the body clear bronchitis and other infections
- Black and green teas have catechin, a phytochemical purported to have natural antibiotic and anti-diarrhea effects

Avoid people who are sick. Try to stay at least six feet away from people experiencing symptoms of winter illnesses. This can be impossible if you are a caretaker or live with a cold or flu sufferer, but limiting your contact with others can prevent the illness from spreading. If you are responsible for someone with a cold or flu, wash your hands and disinfect the area often. Try to do a thorough cleaning when the person has recovered, as well.

Recognize the difference between a cold and the flu. Sometimes it's hard to tell, but the treatment can be very different. In fact, there are some antiviral medications your doctor can prescribe for the flu that can lessen its duration and severity. Unfortunately, no similar medications exist for the common cold. However, over the counter cold medicines can provide some relief of your symptoms. If you have chronic medical conditions, check with your doctor before taking a cold medicine. Some have ingredients that might interact with other medications or conditions. Home remedies and non-pharmaceutical options can help alleviate some symptoms of cold or flu (see sidebar on reverse).

Stay home while you're contagious. If you have the flu, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone to make sure you won't spread the virus to others. It's a little harder to know when to come back to work with a cold. Generally a day or two to recover and lessen the risk of transmission is enough. Always check with a doctor if your symptoms do not clear up after seven days or get much worse.



Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Viruses are mostly spread through mucus. Cover your mouth with the inside of your elbow so you don't cough or sneeze into your hand. Remember to throw your tissues away as soon as you use them and wash or sanitize your hands after using them.

Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs are easy to pick up when you touch something with germs and then touch those parts of your face. Because viruses are spread through mucus, the eyes, nose, and mouth allow much easier absorption of germs into the body.

Wipe down your desk and other common areas both at work and at home. Telephones, desks, water fountain handles, microwave door handles, and computer keyboards in offices contain large amounts of germs.

It might not be possible to prevent catching a cold or the flu this year, but being informed and taking simple precautions like these can help you limit your risk and alleviate the symptoms if you do get sick.

Adapted from www.webmd.com



Recipe of the Month:

“Cure My Cold” Chicken Soup

This soup is easy to make, even if you're not feeling great. And the steam as it simmers might help your stuffed up nose! Double the recipe and freeze some to have a supply on hand for your next cold.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon butter or
1 tablespoon margarine
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 lb. boneless skinned chicken breast,
cut into ¾-inch cubes
1 quart basic chicken stock
2 medium carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
2 stalks celery, thinly sliced
1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
½ cup long-grain rice
2 tablespoons parsley, minced
¼ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon black pepper

Instructions

In a 5 or 6 quart stock pot over moderate heat, melt the butter in the oil. Add the chicken and brown it lightly, stirring occasionally – about 5 minutes.

Add the stock, carrots, celery, onion, rice, parsley, salt and pepper. Cover, bring to a simmer over low heat, then cook until the rice is tender, about 20 minutes.

Nutrition per serving (makes 3 servings):

Calories: 516; Calories from Fat: 148;
Fat: 16.6g; Saturated Fat: 5g; Cholesterol:
116.6mg; Sodium: 915mg; Carbohydrates:
45.5g; Fiber: 3g; Sugar: 9.7g; Protein: 43.6g

Adapted from www.food.com