

Don't let a Cold or Flu Catch You

February is here and the cold and flu season is still in full swing. Some of you may have already been affected while others are still at risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control, up to 20% of the U.S. population catches the flu each year. They spread quickly and if you are not careful, you stand a good chance at catching one. The following preventative steps come from an article in Health and Wellness. You don't have to wait for a cold or flu to hit before you take action.

Step 1: Get your yearly flu shot

This shot is essential to flu prevention. And Relax—you won't get the flu from this shot, although you may experience mild flu-like symptoms that won't last long. Why get it? Because the shot prepares your immune system to fight off the virus if it does slip through your outer defenses.

Step 2: Take care of your body from the inside out

When you're making an effort to stay in shape, it's nice to get twice the payoff. You'll be happy to know that the following healthy habits not only help you lose weight, stay energized, and decrease your stress level, but they also help your immune system stay in top fighting form.

Eating right: Go big on fruits, veggies, and fish, and downsize the red meat and junk food. This healthier diet won't just help you lose weight—it will provide more of the daily nutrition your immune system needs to do its job.

Take a multivitamin: The Journal of the American Medical Association urges all adults to take a multivitamin supplement. Taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement every day can make up for deficiencies your diet may struggle with, and ensure that your body has the nutrients it needs for optimum health.

Exercise regularly: Consistent exercise—walking, jogging, or bicycling four or five times a week—boosts your immune system's readiness level. Studies found that people who exercised consistently reported fewer sick days due to colds and sore throats. And your boss would surely appreciate that!

Step 3: Disinfect your home regularly

With all the germs you bring in and the surfaces you contact daily, your home is a perfect place to pick up a cold or flu. That's why it's important for your health that you regularly disinfect your home.

Start in your kitchen because germs congregate on counters, tables, cutting boards, sinks, stoves, microwaves, and floors. Use a disinfectant to eliminate germs on these hard surfaces. And pay special attention to your dishcloth or sponge. It's got more germs on it than anything else in your kitchen. You can disinfect it daily by simply throwing it in the dishwasher with the dishes.

In your bathrooms, disinfect toilet seats, toilet handles, faucet knobs, tubs, counters, shower curtains, and floors. Also, Germs love toothbrushes, so replace them every two months. And keep them from touching—especially if a family member is ill.

Lastly, disinfect all the other places germs may hang out. Doorknobs, remote controls, chairs, toys, phones, and computer desks are all prime real estate for germs.

Step 4: Renew your hygiene habits

Take cover when you cough: According to the Centers for Disease Control, the flu virus spreads mainly through the air—borne by coughs and sneezes. Instead of using your hand to cover a cough or sneeze, use a tissue, or cover with the crook of your elbow (an area less likely to come in contact with other surfaces and spread germs).

Wash, wash, and wash your hands: This is one of the most effective measures you can take for your health. Washing your hands frequently can get rid of germs you might spread to others, and can protect you from germs you may pick up from germ-ridden surfaces. Get your kids in the habit—especially before eating and after playing outside or with friends. And when you are on the go, it's a good idea to keep an antibacterial sanitizer handy.

Remember, a little conscious effort now could save lots of worry and illness later on. Just think prevention to stay healthy and happy.

<http://www.examiner.com/topic/health-and-wellness>

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