



How to Stay Healthy This Flu Season

Vaccination is not the only way to help prevent the flu. Here are steps you and your family can take to stay healthy this winter.

Perhaps the simplest and most effective way is to wash your hands often with soap and warm water. Rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces. Wash for at least 20 seconds. (Tip: Have your children sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice while washing.) It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs. Use regular soap. Antibacterial soap is not necessary. These soaps may contribute to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance.

When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using a gel, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in the gel kills germs that cause colds and the flu. However, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers do not remove dirt.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when people touch something that is contaminated with germs and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some can live for 2 hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and tables.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs cause illnesses like the flu (influenza). The flu usually spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the droplets from the cough or sneeze move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. So, always cough or sneeze into your sleeve, or use a tissue and then throw it away. Do not reuse a tissue. When coughing or sneezing into your hands, be sure to wash your hands afterwards, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

If you feel ill, stay home from work and keep sick kids home from school or daycare. And keep in mind – most people with flu will recover just fine.

For further questions, contact your local provider or Cloud County Health Center Infection Control.

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