



➤ Cold and flu health tips

December

It's cold and flu season: stay healthy

Sneezing? Sniffles? Aching head? The fact is you're sick, but what do you have — a cold or the flu? Here's how to tell what you've got and the best way to get better.

If you've got a cold, chances are you've got a runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, headache or body aches, a mild-to-moderate fever and are sneezing. Over-the-counter medications like antihistamines, decongestants and acetaminophen can effectively relieve congestion, aches and other cold symptoms.

While some of the symptoms are the same, flu symptoms tend to be more severe and can include chills and profound fatigue. Plenty of rest and plenty of fluids are the best way to treat either a cold or flu and — since they're both contagious during the first few days — it's best to stay home and get some rest. If symptoms persist be sure to contact your doctor.

A good strategy to avoid getting sick? Make sure to wash your hands often.

Sources: CDC, Health Line

Winter health tips

Winter is a great time to enjoy family, celebrate life and enjoy colder weather activities. It's also cold and flu season, so it's especially important to adopt some healthy living strategies to stay well.

Keeping your immune system in good working condition is easier than you might think. Regular exercise will help control your blood pressure and keep your weight at a healthy level. Eat a diet full of fresh fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fats. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation and be sure to get plenty of sleep. Another great way to stay healthy this winter is to wash your hands regularly, making sure to use soap and clean running water.

Sickness aside, it's important to stay safe when travelling. Always be sure to wear your seatbelt when driving cross-country or just around the corner. And if you've been celebrating the season with alcohol, make sure someone else drives.

Stay healthy and have a great winter!

Sources: Harvard Health, CDC

Trivia time:

How fast does a sneeze travel?

Answer: About 100 miles per hour!

Sources: Discovery



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The dirt on germs

Microscopic organisms (aka germs) that can cause disease and illness are everywhere. They're in the air, in water, in soil, and yes, on our skin and in our bodies. While germs are indeed everywhere, there's plenty we can do to stay healthy. Handwashing is our best defense, when done properly. It's kind of a do-it-yourself vaccine. It's quick, simple and can keep us all from getting sick. It's important to use soap and running water and to wash for at least 20 seconds. It's also best to use a disposable towel to dry your hands, or better yet, an air dryer that reduces waste and saves paper. Always wash before eating and after being in public spaces, and make sure to regularly sanitize your steering wheel, phone, computer keyboard and light switches — where germs love to hide! Scrub up and stay healthy!

Sources: Minnesota Dept. of Health, CDC, Indiatimes, AAAS

Trivia time:

We sneeze, and so do our cats and dogs, but do bugs sneeze?

Answer: No, since they breathe through tiny holes in their skin.

Sources: Highlights

Flu season's here

If you've got body aches, a fever, cough and maybe even chills, you've probably got the flu, which typically lasts 3 to 7 days.

While the best defense against the flu is a vaccine, it's important to wash your hands often during flu season, which is generally considered to be October through May. Remember, you are contagious up to a day before symptoms appear and up to 5 to 7 days after, so make sure to cover coughs and sneezes to protect those around you.

Source: CDC

Got the flu? Here's what to do.

If the flu bug's bitten, here's what you need to know to feel better:

- Drink lots of fluids to stay hydrated
- Get plenty of sleep and rest
- Wash your hands frequently to prevent spreading it to those around you
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for aches and fever

Symptoms should subside within 3 to 7 days, but if they do not, see your doctor immediately. And next year... be sure to get a flu vaccine to reduce your chances of getting it again!

Sources: CDC, Teens Health