

Winter Health Tips

Seven Ways to Avoid Colds & Flu

Cough, snuffle and sneeze.

If there's one thing you can generally count on every year, it's that some time during the months between September and February you will get sick at least once. Your throat will feel sore and scratchy, your nose will be either stuffy, runny, or both, you'll sneeze uncontrollably, your body will ache and your head may feel disconnected from the rest of your body. But never fear! The tips below will help you stay healthy this winter!



1. Wash your hands.

The single most important thing you can do to help prevent getting a cold or the flu is to wash your hands with lots of soap! Don't forget to take hand sanitizer with you and clean phones with disinfectant wipes.

2. Drink hot liquids.

Drink (decaffeinated) hot liquids, like tea with honey, or chicken broth. Hot liquids relieve nasal congestion, prevent dehydration and soothe the uncomfortably inflamed membranes that line your nose and throat. Tea can even act as a mild anti-inflammatory and honey as a mild antiseptic, killing disease-causing bacteria!

3. Sleep with an extra pillow.

Sleep with an extra pillow under your head. This will help relieve any congested nasal passages. If the angle is too awkward, try placing the pillows between the mattress and the box spring to create a more gradual slope.

4. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate.

Drink plenty of fluids. Why? Because water flushes your system, washing out the poisons as it re-hydrates you. You are getting enough fluids if the color of your urine is close to being clear. Otherwise, you need more fluids!

5. Step outside for some fresh air.

Get fresh air! A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. Also, during cold weather more people stay indoors, which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.

6. Replace your toothbrush after being sick.

Replace toothbrushes after being sick; they can breed germs and bacteria.

7. Eat garlic.

Go for the garlic! Garlic boosts your immune system and increases resistance to infection and stress. Consuming the fresh juice is the most effective way to get the benefits of garlic. If this isn't the most appealing option, try garlic capsules.

When should I go to the doctor?

Tens of thousands of cold victims each year go to the doctor to seek treatment, but that's not usually necessary. Unless you're feverish or your symptoms include wheezing or pain around your nose, ears or chest, all of which could indicate a more severe infection, you should probably just stay home and rest.

The ultimate goal of the body's immune and inflammatory system is to rid the body of the virus and in doing so it creates a lot of "ruckus" (i.e., sneezing, coughing, etc.). It's this "ruckus" that makes you feel bad. Know your own body by monitoring your symptoms. If you are ever uncertain about your wellbeing, contact your health care provider.

Contact your health care provider if you experience:

- Symptoms that worsen or don't seem to subside after seven days.
- A fever of 103 degrees Fahrenheit or greater.
- Severe pain in your ears.
- Chest tightness, difficulty breathing and/or wheezing.
- Yellow or green nasal drainage.
- Confusion, dizzy spells or fainting.

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