



Surviving the Cold and Flu Season

Here are some ways to lower your risk of catching colds, coughs or flu - but if the worst happens, there's some good advice on how to get better soon.

Keep your Lifestyle as Healthy as Possible.

Eating a diet which includes plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit each day, going for regular walks and avoiding too much alcohol all make it easier for your body to resist any kind of infection, including colds and flu.

Be a Non-Smoker

One advantage of not smoking is that you get fewer colds, coughs, sore throats & flu than if you smoke.

Keep Away from People Who Have a Cold or Flu

Because the viruses that cause these infections are coughed and sneezed into the air you share with other people, it helps to stay away from people who are ill, and to avoid enclosed, crowded places if you can. Don't touch other people's used tissues or handkerchiefs. If you have flu, it's better to stay away from work so you don't pass it on to others.

Wash Your Hands More Often

It's very easy to pick up cold and flu germs from things other people have touched - telephones, door handles or money, for instance - or from shaking hands with someone who is infected. Reduce your risk of catching a cold or flu by washing hands frequently - using warm water and soap removes germs better than a quick rinse under the cold tap. It's also important to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands - these are all ways that germs can get into your system.

Have the Flu Vaccine, If You Need It

Check with your doctor if you're unsure.



What to Do If you Catch a Cold or Flu

The best treatment is to rest, keep warm and drink plenty of fluids to help flush the germs out of your system. Although there are no drugs to cure colds and flu, there are some non-prescription medications available from pharmacies which can help relieve the symptoms. Besides relieving symptoms like headache and sore throat, some painkillers such as aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen also help reduce fever.

Acetaminophen is best for children - aspirin is unsuitable for children under 12. Whenever you buy painkillers or cough and cold remedies, always read the directions carefully. Some of these drugs shouldn't be taken with other medication, others can cause drowsiness which can be dangerous if you're driving or operating machinery. If in doubt, ask your pharmacist.



Do You Need Antibiotics?

There are two types of germs - bacteria and viruses.

Antibiotics can only kill bacteria - they don't kill the viruses

which cause colds and flu. But if a person is already ill with a cold or flu, they may also become ill with an infection caused by bacteria - when this happens a doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat the bacterial infection. If you are prescribed antibiotics, remember to finish the whole pack. If you don't finish the pack or if you take the pills less often than the doctor advises, it means you will have too little medication in your body - not enough to kill the germs, but enough to help the germs learn to become resistant to the drug. This is causing a serious health problem for everyone because so many antibiotics are now powerless against some types of disease. This is because misuse of antibiotics helps germs learn how to fight back. It's also important not use antibiotics that have been prescribed for someone else, nor to give other people's antibiotics to children.

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