

## Cold and flu prevention: Importance of practicing good health habits

### At work:

- Wash your hands. Carry alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. This is the quickest way for a virus to enter your body.
- Use a tissue when you sneeze or cough.
- Use a paper towel to open doors or to shut off faucets in bathrooms.
- Try to avoid contact with coworkers who are sick. Use gloves or mask whenever necessary.
- Keep your work area clean by using a sanitizer at least once a week on work surfaces.
- Stay home if you think you are contagious.

### At home:

- Sanitize door handles and other things kids touch, such as toys.
- Avoid sharing drinking and eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Sanitize toothbrushes or replace them more often.  
Use paper towels instead of cloth towels in the bathroom and kitchen.
- Teach kids not to share, such as any kind of beverage, or double dipping chips, etc.
- If a spouse is ill, sleep on the couch or in the guest room.
- Wash bed sheets after someone has been ill.
- If a child crawls in bed with a parent, sleep behind them to avoid being coughed or sneezed on.
- Keep kids home from school/day care when necessary.
- Avoid crowds during flu season.

### In general:

- Exercise regularly.
- Drink plenty of fluids such as water and/or orange juice.
- Get plenty of rest. Seven to nine hours is recommended.
- Get fresh air.
- Relax, keep stress at a minimum. Chronic stress can weaken the immune system.

### Flu vaccination:

Yearly flu vaccination should begin as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season. For people not able to get their influenza vaccine in the fall, vaccination in December, January and beyond is beneficial.

### Steps to effective hand washing:

- Wet your hands with clean water – warm, if available – and apply soap.
- Lather by rubbing hands together; be sure to cover all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands together for 20-30 seconds – sing the ABCs in your head.
- Thoroughly rinse hands under running water to ensure removal of residual germs.
- Use paper towels or an air dryer to dry hands and then, if possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.
- If unable to wash hands with soap and water, use the hand sanitizer that are at least 62% alcohol based.

### Cover your cough:

- Use a tissue or inside of your elbow when sneezing or coughing.
- Germs from coughing or sneezing can be spread over 100 square feet!

### Cold or flu?

Understanding the difference between having a cold or having the flu can help you combat your symptoms earlier and avoid passing it on to others.

SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high (100-102° F); lasts three to four days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General Aches, Pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Quite Mild	Can last up to two to three weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Mild to Moderate	Common; can become severe

### Influenza vs. "Stomach Flu"

- Sometimes people mistake symptoms of stomach flu, or gastroenteritis, for the viral infection, influenza, that we commonly call "flu."
- The "Stomach Flu" is not the flu. It is a gastrointestinal illness caused by a number of factors including bacteria, viruses and parasites.
- The flu, which causes fever, congestion, muscle aches, and fatigue, is caused by viruses only.