



# Cold, Flu, Covid-19 Prevention

## Staying Healthy During Flu Season

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Flu season typically occurs between October and April. Here are some effective measures to protect yourself & your loved ones avoid becoming infected or preventing the spread of the COVID-19, cold & flu viruses.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Get Vaccinated
- Practice Good Hygiene
- Maintain A Healthy Lifestyle
- Clean & Disinfect Surfaces
- Follow Other Precautions

### INTRODUCTION



Woke up with a sore throat? Sneezes won't stop? Have you or your kids been up all night coughing? Being sick is *never* fun! Your symptoms could be caused by many things, like the flu or a common cold. And we can't forget about COVID-19. There's a lot to look forward to in the months ahead, and especially the holidays and winter fun. OK, so maybe you can't prevent every illness. But **you can still do a lot now to help your body fight off germs later.** Start with these science-backed tips straight from an infectious disease doctor.

### HOW YOUR BODY BEATS INFECTIONS

**Your immune system is your first line of defense against germs.** It's a complicated network that includes your skin, breathing tracts, white blood cells and lymph nodes. All these work together to fight off germs that try to get into the body. We are born with great protections, and throughout our lives, our bodies acquire more. We develop some protections based on the exposures that we have to infectious agents (germs). And we build others by taking vaccines or interventions that doctors give us.



### THE BASICS OF PREVENTING COLDS, FLU & COVID-19

One of the great things about these stay-well strategies is that they also help protect the people around you. And after nearly 5 years of pandemic living, you are probably a pro at them:

- **Get the annual flu shot.**
- **Get your COVID-19 shots and boosters.**
- Wash your hands often, including every time you come home.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth unnecessarily.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
- Ask your pharmacist about over-the-counter medications you can take for your symptoms.
- Talk to your doctor about medication for Cold, flu or COVID-19.



Getting your annual flu/cold shot and making sure that you have also gotten your COVID-19 boosters are things that will most certainly help keep you and your loved ones healthy, happy and in the holiday spirit! Remember, these vaccinations are available to you free of cost through your insurance coverage! You can also get both vaccines administered at the same time.



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## FIVE HEALTHY HABITS THAT FIGHT GERMS

Here are some everyday routines you can do to keep you healthy. Most important is making a commitment to do them!



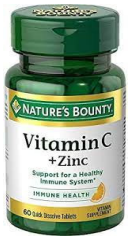
**#1: GET ENOUGH SLEEP.** Those seven-to-eight hours in dreamland matter a lot to your immune system. **During sleep, your body produces substances that help fight off germs.** Not getting enough hours of rest can lower your defenses. One study found that people who slept five hours or less per night were more likely to catch infections such as COVID-19. And another reported that teens who slept only six hours a night were more likely to come down with a cold or the flu.

**#2: EXERCISE DAILY.** Better sleep. Less worry. Feeling great in your jeans. Fewer sick days. There are lots of benefits to daily exercise! Less than 60 minutes a day is all your body usually needs. That can mean 20 to 30 minutes of daily walking, playing tennis or having a dance party (even if it is by yourself with your favorite boogie music blasting away!).



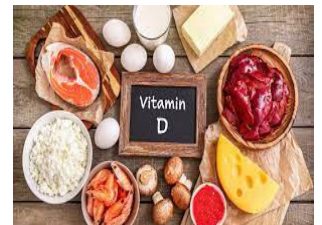
Exercise helps your blood circulate. That keeps your white blood cells in a healthy flow. These cells help your body fight germs, including those that cause common colds and the flu. A workout also gets your lungs working better. Heavier breathing may help push out germs from your lungs, which lowers your chance of getting sick.

And if you get your annual flu shot, there's more good news. **Exercising may improve your vaccine response.** That means it may help you get even more protection from your jab.



**#3: TAKE YOUR VITAMINS.** Think of your germ-fighting cells as soldiers. They need the right foods to be in top shape. Here are some of the most important vitamins and minerals your "soldiers" need. Stock up on all your health essentials and be prepared! Feed your body RIGHT!

- **ZINC.** It fights off bacteria and viruses by stopping their growth head-on. **Seafood, red meat and whole grains** are all great sources of this nutrient.
- **VITAMIN A.** This micronutrient builds the body's immune system. It preps your cells for germs by helping them make an immune response plan. **Green, leafy vegetables and fruits such as cantaloupe, apricots and mangoes** have vitamin A.
- **VITAMIN C.** It helps your immune system stay running by telling immune cells it's time to attack and kill the germs. Get this vitamin by eating **oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, broccoli and baked potatoes.**
- **VITAMIN D.** It fights bacteria and viruses by balancing parts of your immune system. **Salmon, tuna, milk and yogurt** in your meals give your body vitamin D.



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**#4: LET YOURSELF RELAX!** Stress is a part of life. But when you go through many tough events or are maxed out every day, your immune system can struggle. Stress hormones such as cortisol can slow a good immune response. And stress can increase inflammation in the body. Inflammation is one way the body heals during infections. But if levels are always high, your body may have trouble responding to a real threat. This can lead to bad outcomes such as:

- ✓ A lower response to vaccines
- ✓ Worsening of symptoms
- ✓ Slow-healing wounds

When you take time to relax, you put the brakes on that stress response. Any activity that makes you happy and calm works. Call a friend. Pick up your knitting needles. Stream your favorite show. *You choose.* **Surrounding yourself with positive energy is vitally important.**

Need more ideas? Go to: <https://www.optum.com/health-articles/article/healthy-mind/how-feel-calmer-minutes/> for ways you can relax and benefit from the time you dedicate to doing so.

**#5: SKIP CIGARETTES & ALCOHOL.** The toxins in cigarettes can weaken your immune system. And alcohol can damage the liver as well as nerve cells. That affects your response to infections. The result? Longer-lasting colds and flu symptoms.



Is it possible that even with all these strategies, can you still get a cold, the flu or other illnesses? Yes. But at least your body will be ready. And **you'll have a better shot at a faster recovery.**

### SEVEN SAFETY MEASURES TO REMEMBER DURING THE FLU SEASON



**#1: CARRY YOURSELF AS IF YOU HAVE THE COLD, FLU, or COVID-19 VIRUS.** This will help the number of infections, as cases are expected to rise during the holidays when people gather and let their guard down. Remember, we are still dealing with new strains of the virus. Before you do anything, ask yourself, "If I'm sick or someone in this group is sick (and may not know it), would it be safe to do this? If the answer is "No" in any instance, it is likely not a good idea.

**#2: KEEP HAND SANTIZER ON HAND** in case you aren't able to access a sink to wash your hands with soap & water. Disposable gloves could be useful when using keypads at public places like the grocery store or ATM.



**#3: DISTANCE YOURSELF** from all people you encounter. That means assuming anyone you encounter could have COVID-19 and staying at least 6 feet apart from others whenever possible.

**#4: WASH YOUR HANDS THOROUGHLY & OFTEN** with soap for at least 20 seconds (sing the birthday song 2x for good measure). Be sure to lather between each finger and the tops of your hands too! Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth until your hands are clean.

**#5: WEAR A FACE MASK** when out in public, even if not currently required. It should fit snugly and cover your nose & mouth completely. The most effective typically have 3 layers of cloth material. Avoid using a mask with ventilation valves or gaiters; experts have reported these types of face covers are worse than not wearing a mask at all.



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**#6: AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE & MOUTH** when you are out in public. When you get home, remove your face mask carefully, throw it away if disposable or wash it if made of cloth. Wash your hands before doing anything else.

**#7: ENSURE YOU HAVE GOOD AIR-FLOW** as much as possible if you are hosting a gathering. Also, make sure to sanitize high-touch surfaces to help prevent the spread of germs.

### TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **COMMIT** to practicing the above healthy habits & safety measures. Stock up on your vitamins, get your exercise, & make sure you don't cheat yourself out of a good night's sleep!
- ✓ **REMEMBER** that crowded places means more of a chance that there are viruses you may unintentionally pick up & bring home to your loved ones. Take the necessary precautions to help prevent getting infected—wear a mask in public areas, don't touch your face, & wash your hands as soon as you get home.
- ✓ **YOU ARE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT** when it comes to staying healthy & practicing good habits. Treat yourself well!



### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. The COVID pandemic is now over so we can drop our guard a bit when it comes to prevention. T    F
2. Making sure you get your annual Cold/Flu shot and COVID-19 vaccination boosters will help You stay healthy during the Flu Season. T    F
3. A study has shown that if a person gets 5 hours or less of sleep, they are more likely to catch Infections such as COVID-19, a Cold or the Flu. T    F
4. Taking Vitamins Zinc, A, C & D can help boost your immune system, along with eating foods containing these vitamins. T    F
5. It is okay to touch your face, nose & mouth when out in public as long as you are not sick. T    F
6. There is no need to wear a face mask in crowded areas now that it is not required. T    F
7. Another good practice I will commit to during the Flu Season to help me & my loved stay healthy & avoid being infected with COVID-19, Cold or Flu is: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_