

Seasonal Flu Prevention Tips

It's that time of year when coughs, colds and seasonal flu seem to spread easily. Follow these simple tips to avoid spreading illness this winter.

■ **Wash your hands frequently** using warm water and soap, scrubbing all surfaces for about 15-20 seconds. Some flu viruses can live up to two hours on surfaces such as desks, phones and door knobs. When soap and water are not available, hand sanitizers containing 60-90% ethyl alcohol or isopropanol may be used.

■ **Avoid touching your face**, unless you have clean hands. The eyes, nose and mouth are entry ports for flu viruses.

■ **Cover your mouth** with a disposable tissue when coughing and sneezing. Dispose of tissues and wash your hands immediately.

■ **Avoid sharing objects** (cups, utensils, etc.). Wipe down shared equipment such as phones and keyboards.

■ **Get enough sleep and manage your stress.** Lack of sleep and high levels of stress can reduce immune functioning, thus lowering the body's ability to fend off colds and flu.

■ **Drink more water.** You may not feel as thirsty during fall and winter, but it's important to make sure you don't get dehydrated. Consume at least 8 glasses a day.

■ **Maintain a moderate exercise program** 3-4 days a week. It will strengthen the immune system and increase the body's natural ability to fight infection.

■ **Eat healthfully.** Remember to eat the recommended 5-9 servings per day of fruits and vegetables.

■ **Limit alcohol intake.** Alcohol can be dehydrating which, in turn, may decrease your resistance.

■ **Finally, listen to your body.** Stay home if you have a fever and are coughing. You will feel better, recover faster if you rest and reduce the risk of infecting others.

