



The Beacon

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“Guiding your way to better health management”

How to Flu Proof Your Home...Car...Office

Each year, tens of millions of Americans contract influenza. For most, it just makes for an unpleasant week, but 200,000 flu sufferers each year end up in the hospital -- and 36,000 Americans die from flu complications. The majority of outbreaks occur between October and May, with the peak season between late December and early March. Here are some strategies to flu-proof you home, car and office....

Get the vaccine. As many as two-thirds of those who should get the flu shot, don't -- even though it is the single best way to flu-proof your life. The Centers for Disease Control recommend flu shots, particularly for anyone over age 50, because potentially fatal flu complications are more common as you get older. Flu shots also are strongly recommended for children from six months to five years... and for anyone with a chronic lung, kidney or heart condition, diabetes or a weakened immune system.

Wash hands properly and often. Hand washings should be vigorous and last at least 20 seconds to be effective. Simply lathering up and

quickly rinsing aren't enough. Scrub one hand against the other with soap to dislodge flu viruses.

If you're not near a sink, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be equally effective. Hands become sterile only when the alcohol evaporates, leaving them dry so do not use too much.

Learn the difference between a cold and the flu. People often mistake bad colds for the flu. The onset of the flu is sudden, and includes fever, severe muscle aches and fatigue, while colds tend to take hold gradually and often are not accompanied by severe aches or a fever. When flu includes a cough, it tends to be a dry cough. Call you doctor immediately if you think you have the flu.



HOME

Your spouse and children are the ones most likely to bring the flu virus into your home. *What to do...*

Avoid sharing silverware, glasses and kisses with a family member who is not feeling well.

Use disinfectant wipes to clean items you commonly touch.

Ask your doctor for a prophylactic dose of an antiviral medication, such as Tamiflu or Relenza, if someone in your house has the flu. These prescription drugs can reduce the odds that you will come down with it.

Postpone visits from young children if they are not feeling well or if the flu has been active at their school.



CAR

When you share a car ride with someone and one of you has the flu at the beginning of even a short trip, the odds are good that both of you will be by the end. *What to do...*

Encourage sick car pool members to stay home. If you find out that you shared a car in the past 48 hours with someone who has the flu, ask your doctor for Tamiflu or Relenza.

If you let someone else drive your car -- even a parking attendant -- use alcohol disinfectant wipes on the door handle, window controls, steering wheel, gearshift handle, seat controls, radio controls and any other surfaces that the other driver is likely to have touched.



WORKPLACE

The biggest threat is sick colleagues who drag themselves to work.

Don't share office supplies. Shared pens are particularly dangerous because many people unthinkingly touch them to their lips. Always carry a pen with you (which also is useful for signing at stores and restaurants). Avoid sharing your phone and computer keyboard. When office equipment must be shared, wash your hands thoroughly before and after use and wipe off the equipment with a disinfectant wipe.

Other office trouble spots: Door handles, drawer pulls, conference room tabletops, water fountains and elevator, fax and copier buttons.

Keep an eye out for coworkers who sneeze into their hands. These people spread their germs when they handle office equipment or shake hands.

If you attend a meeting featuring snacks and handshakes, try to handle your food only with your left hand to decrease the odds that flu germs will make it to your mouth. When in the office cafeteria, don't touch your change and then your food without washing your hands in between.

Use a paper towel to turn off the water and open the door after washing your hand in the office bathroom.

Encourage sick colleagues to go home -- and do so yourself if you are not feeling well. If you are a manager, make sure employees understand that a sick day won't be held against them.



ASK A NURSE

Q: What's the best way to tell if a person is becoming dehydrated?

A: **Subtle dehydration produces** a dry mouth and decreased urination as well as decreased sweating. As dehydration progresses, you will see increased skin turgor ("tenting" when the skin is gently pinched and doesn't snap back). Dehydration will cause generalized weakness, easy fatigue and, eventually, mental status changes, such as confusion or the inability to concentrate. *To prevent dehydration:* Drink one-half ounce of water per pound of body weight daily. If you urinate every two to three hours, you are well hydrated.

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Q: My feet hurt after I walk a lot. How can I prevent this?

A: **An exercise called "foot dome"** strengthens the muscles of the transverse arch, which extends below the pads of your toes. Strengthening the arch helps the feet to absorb impact. *What to do:* In bare feet, take a half step forward with your left foot. Keep most of your weight on your right foot. With your left heel firmly planted on the floor and your toes as straight as possible, raise the top of your left foot so that it looks like a dome. Hold the position for a count of 10. Repeat with your right foot. Perform five times daily.

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Q: My wife told me that vitamin D affects prostate cancer risk. Is this true?

A: **Yes. Vitamin D, which the body manufactures** as a result of exposure to ultraviolet light in sunshine, has

been found to prevent the onset and growth of prostate and other types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer. *Self-defense:* It is important for men to get regular sun exposure, especially when they're young, but to keep it to a reasonable and safe level (usually 10 to 15 minutes of sunshine daily without using sunscreen) to avoid increased risk for skin cancer.

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Recipe Corner

Roasted Butternut Squash

Sweet but hearty, this fall favorite is loaded with disease-fighting nutrients.

8 cups prepackaged cubed (1") butternut squash (about 4 lb peeled, seeded, and cubed)

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp ground allspice
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

1. Pre-heat oven to 425°F
2. Toss squash with oil in large bowl. In small bowl, combine cumin, salt, allspice, coriander, and pepper. Sprinkle squash with spices and toss well to evenly coat.
3. Spread squash in single layer on 2 baking sheets or pans and roast 40 minutes, turning every 10 minutes.



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition are the National Foundation for Infectious Disease, and Prevention Magazine.