Staying Healthy During Flu Season

Nothing is more important in protecting yourself from contagious viruses than washing your hands appropriately. Be sure to use warm water, rub your hands together vigorously for 20 to 30 seconds, and rinse your hands methodically to remove all soap. In addition, the following measures will help reduce the transmission of viruses:

- Keep your hands away from your face so that viruses do not invade the mucus membranes in your nose, eyes, and mouth.
- Disinfect shared equipment such as telephones, desks, doorknobs, shopping cart handles, kitchen counters and computer keyboards with disinfecting wipes or solutions.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don’t have a tissue handy, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not your hand.
- Throw tissues away immediately after use, and wash your hands.
- Keep alcohol based hand sanitizers readily available. Use them after shopping, pumping gas, using an ATM, handling money and before eating food from a drive-thru restaurant.
- Consult your healthcare provider about getting appropriate flu shots.
- Get plenty of rest. Adults need seven to eight hours of sleep per night. Children need even more.
- Stick to a healthy diet. Foods rich in vitamins A, C, and E such as milk, citrus fruits, vegetables, nuts, and eggs can strengthen your immune system.
- Drink water. It flushes your system and keeps you hydrated during the dry winter months.
- Reduce stress by exercising, listening to music, meditating, practicing yoga, relaxing with a book, or watching a funny movie or television show.
- Stop smoking. Smoking destroys the cilia fibers in your nose and lungs that sweep mucus filled with contaminants out of your body.
- Wash water bottles before refilling them. Never share bottles or cups with anyone. Use disposable cups in the bathroom and kitchen.
- Identify a separate room in your home for taking care of sick family members.
- Avoid being around those who are sick unless you are caring for them. In that case, consider wearing a facemask in addition to following the above precautions.

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