

Avoid Catching a Cold

Sneezing, scratchy throat, runny nose—everyone knows the first signs of a cold. Although the common cold is usually mild with symptoms lasting 1 to 2 weeks, it is a leading cause of doctor visits and missed days from school and work. Children have about 5 to 7 colds a year and adults average about 2 to 3 colds a year. The main reason why colds are more common in children is because they are often in close contact with each other in daycare centers and schools. Women, especially those between the ages of 20 and 30, have more colds than men, possibly because of their closer contact with children.

In the United States, most colds occur during the fall and winter. The most common cold-causing viruses survive better when humidity is low—the colder months of the year. Cold weather also may make the inside lining of your nose drier and more vulnerable to viral infection.

Take the following steps to reduce the likelihood of catching a cold:

Wash Your Hands

Most cold viruses are spread by direct contact, so wash your hands often or rub an alcohol-based hand sanitizer onto your hands. Frequent and diligent hand washing is the single most effective measure one can take to reduce the likelihood of catching a cold.



Don't Touch Your Face

Cold viruses enter the body through the eyes, nose, or mouth. Avoid touching your face without first washing your hands.

Clean Common Surfaces with Disinfectant

It's important to regularly disinfect any shared objects or surfaces to minimize the spread of the common cold viruses. Avoid touching door handles whenever possible; if you must contact one, wash your hands promptly.

Drink Plenty of Fluids

Water flushes your system, washing out toxins as the body rehydrates. A typical, healthy adult needs eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids each day. An easy method to determine if you're getting enough liquid is to take note of the color of your urine. If the color of your urine is light yellow or clear, you're getting enough water. If it's a darker yellow, you need more water.

Be "Cold Smart"

During cold and flu season, avoid crowds when possible. Help prevent the spread of the virus by coughing or sneezing into a tissue, or into the elbow bend of your arm if a tissue is not available. Be sure to exercise regularly, as this boosts the immune system and may minimize the effects of a cold if you catch one. You can also "supercharge" your immune system by eating dark green foods that contain high concentrations of vitamins A and C.

Sources

www.webmd.com

www.cdc.gov