

Resources

More information on hygienic approaches to cold and flu care, proper home hygiene, and other related topics can be found online at:

Center for Health & Hygiene in the Home and Community
www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth
Look for our brochures on:

- Proper Hand Washing to Reduce the Risk of Flu Transmission
- Cleaning to Reduce the Risk of H1N1 Flu Virus At Home

FDA
www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm316375.htm

Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/uri/colds.html

www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/symptom-relief.html

EPA
http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pdfs/humidifier_factsheet.pdf

*Kotz, D. (2012, September 10). Advice on Nasal Cleaning. *Boston Globe*. 78, pp 10.



Center for Health & Hygiene in Home & Community

The Center for Health and Hygiene in Home and Community serves as a national and international resource for information and education, applied research, professional training and conferences. The Center focuses on issues relating to hygiene and infection control in areas such as:

- consumer food safety
- home hygiene
- daycare
- preschool
- homecare
- sports and leisure activity
- travel and hospitality

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Center for Health & Hygiene in Home & Community

Preventative Self-Care for Cold & Flu Season



February 2013

The chance of getting influenza (flu) and/or a common cold rises as the weather gets colder between October and May. Colds are generally mild and the flu can be severe. **Preventative self care is key to avoiding and resolving seasonal cold and flu symptoms.** For more information about colds & the flu, review the resources listed on the reverse side of this pamphlet.

This pamphlet is dedicated to preventative self care that can help you avoid and/or minimize cold and flu symptoms safely.

Tip 1: Practice Chronic Prevention

Hygienic cleaning and self-care can help decrease infection when you are exposed to cold and flu viruses.



For example, **frequent & thorough hand-washing is key to reducing transmission** of bacterial and viral infections, including cold and flu viruses.

Be kind to your own immune system by getting sufficient rest and nutrition.



- Healthy adults should get between 7-8 hours of sleep. These additional hours will support immune health.
- When you are healthy, boost immunity by eating whole, fresh foods.



Tip 2: Clean Out the Germs

A popular method of controlling respiratory infections is routine flushing of the sinus cavity with salted, warm water. This can remove excess mucus and bacteria from the nasal passage.

Neti Pots are commercially available nasal flushing systems. In 2012, a handful of deaths were linked to rare brain infections by an amoeba (water parasite). The same water is safe for drinking because this water parasite does not cause illness when swallowed. Deaths were caused by victims not using sterilized water with their neti pots (Kotz, 2010*).

The FDA released specific guidelines in response to neti pot infections:

- Clean your hands before and after neti pot use.
- Use sterilized water. Water can be sterilized at home by boiling for 3-5 minutes and cooling just before nasal flushing.



NOTE: Brita filters do not sterilize water.

- Clean the neti pot after use with new sterile water.
- Air dry completely before storing the neti pot.



Tip 3: Air Out the Germs

Humidifiers are also great tools to minimize respiratory symptoms. They increase the humidity in the room, which is a natural way to decrease congestion—loosening up the sinuses. This is especially effective in the winter because many heating systems can dry air out.



It is critical to clean humidifiers! This will help prevent the growth of bacteria and fungus inside the machine or on the filter. Dirty humidifiers can dirty your air!

The EPA suggests a specific cleaning and maintenance regimen for all humidifiers.

- Turn off and unplug unit before cleaning.
- Empty tank daily and dry all surfaces with a clean cloth. Refill tank with bottled, distilled water.
- Clean every 3rd day of use using a scrub brush and disinfectant (i.e. 3% hydrogen peroxide).

Did you know? By the time humidifier mist gets to your nose, it is a similar temperature whether it came from a warm or a cool mist unit. This is because much of the heat is lost before it reaches you.

NOTE: Warm mist humidifiers can present some additional safety concerns.

- heated water and steam can cause burns
- increased potential for excessive microbial growth

