

February 2007

The Health Advisor

By Brooke Bennett

Aaachoooo! It's that time of year again! The cold weather has finally caught up with us and seems to have brought with it a lot of sniffing and sneezing. Unfortunately there is no cure for the common cold and there is no foolproof way to prevent colds from spreading among people. There are, however, steps you can take to reduce your family's chance of catching one of the many viruses that causes colds.

First and foremost, wash your hands often! This is probably the easiest and most effective way to keep you and your family from catching a cold. Wash with soap and water - especially after shopping, riding the bus or train, going to the gym or spending time in public places. You can also carry a small tube of hand sanitizer or sanitizing hand wipes with you for convenience. Be sure to teach your children the importance of hand washing too.

Second, build up a strong immune system to get your body ready to fight off infection all year round. Here are some tips to get you going:

- Eat right! Nourish your body with a healthy diet made up of foods rich in immune-boosting nutrients. Good choices include dark green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale), citrus fruits (oranges and grapefruit), fish (salmon, halibut and tuna), beans (navy, kidney and soybeans), low fat yogurt, whole grains, nuts and seeds.
- Get moving! Regular exercise, such as walking, helps keep the body healthy in many ways. Studies show that although people who exercise may still catch a cold, they tend to have milder symptoms and are able to recover more quickly than people who don't get regular exercise.
- Don't smoke! Cigarette smoke can irritate the airways and make you more susceptible to colds and other infections. Even exposure to second hand smoke can make you (and your children) more likely to catch a cold.
- Get some sleep! Studies show that lack of sleep keeps the body from repairing cells and may cause the immune system to weaken. Try to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night during cold and flu season to help your body fight off infection.

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