

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute!

Battling the Bug

With cold and flu season upon us, we're all looking for ways to battle these nasty winter bugs. Here are a few tips for keeping pains, aches, sniffles and sneezes at bay:

Get your shot. The influenza vaccine is the best way to prevent the flu. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 5% to 20% of Americans get the flu each year. More than 200,000 people are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die. These statistics would decrease if more people took advantage of the opportunity to prevent flu with an influenza vaccine or flu shot.

Wash your hands. Warm water and soap will kill the germs, but be sure you don't rush. Twenty seconds is recommended – think about singing "Happy Birthday" twice.

Keep cold and flu germs off surfaces. Colds and flu are caused by viruses which can easily pass from person to person, or from surface to person. Computer keyboards, telephones, doorknobs, pens that are given to you when you sign for a credit card purchase – all of these are surfaces that have great potential for harboring germs. Consider carrying around antiseptic wipes or small bottles of alcohol-based cleansers.

Exercise for immunity. A jog around the block a few times a week not only can do wonders for your physique – it also might prevent you from getting sick. And if you're already sick? The general rule is if your symptoms are above the neck (stuffy nose, sneezing), go ahead. But if you have a fever higher than 100 degrees, a cough or chills, hold off on working out for a few days until you feel better.



Herbal remedies, vitamins – and chicken soup!

There's been a lot of buzz about herbal remedies preventing and shortening the duration of colds, and the research on whether they work shows mixed results. The jury is also out on whether vitamin C can prevent a cold; however, many experts say it will help with the severity and duration if you do get sick. As for chicken soup, researchers have discovered what grandmothers have suspected all along – that the ingredients in chicken soup (chicken stock, carrot, onion and celery) might actually have a medicinal effect on the body's immune system.

Flu prevention should be a goal for everyone. So get a flu shot and work to stay in the best possible health year-round. ■

WebMD.com, 2009.

Is there a Convenience Care clinic near you?

Convenience clinics offer quick and convenient access to affordable care for common medical conditions when you cannot get an immediate appointment with your doctor. They are often located in department stores, grocery stores and pharmacies, and most are open nights and weekends. When your doctor is not available, you can save time and money by using a clinic for minor or routine conditions, instead of going to an Emergency Room or Urgent Care center. For more information, call the toll-free number listed on your ID card.