

“Monica’s Medical Minutes: Flu and Cold Prevention/Relief”

By Monica Petrella RN JKES Clinic - 2013

Colds or Upper Respiratory Infections (URI), and flu (influenza) are common viruses that are spread by coughing, sneezing or nasal secretions. There are a few hundred different cold and flu viruses. They change each year and scientists try to match the viruses with vaccines that most likely cause flu for the year. So, flu vaccines are a good idea but will not cover all types of viruses. The flu shot takes up to 2 weeks for protection to develop and it lasts about a year. It is not too late to get the flu shot, but in addition, here are some simple **cold and flu prevention/relief tips** you and your family can practice at home:

(Keep in mind that **Antibiotics are for bacterial infections, not viruses**, so they will not cure a cold or flu. They can be harmful if not used properly.)

- If you are sick then **stay home**. Don’t infect others such as infants, the elderly or pregnant women. Do not send your child to school until 24 hours **after a fever without the use of fever reducing medicine**.
- Avoid touching your hands to your face: nose, mouth, eyes. This spreads the virus to you and onto surfaces to others.
- Practice good oral hygiene. Gargle with mouthwash twice a day. If you don’t have it, try salt water gargles: ½ tsp salt in 8 oz of water – this helps relieve sore throats. It is safe and you can’t overdo it.
- Change your toothbrush when you are sick.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Eat plenty of healthy foods. Soups (especially homemade – like chicken) are great for providing vitamins and nutrients, restore water balance, help keep blood pressure and salt content under control.
- Get lots of rest and sleep.
- **Practice good hand washing!!!!** One of the best ways to cut down on illness.
- Keep fingernails clean and trim.
- Change/wash sheets and pillow cases etc.
- **Always cough and sneeze into the elbow** or use tissues. Be a role model!
- Try nasal saline sprays or irrigations or a steamy hot shower to relieve nasal congestion.
- Check with your doctor/pediatrician about using humidifiers to prevent dry air.
- Sanitize phones, computer keys, TV remotes, door knobs, railings or anything that is frequently touched by others.
- Check with your doctor/pediatrician or pharmacist about over-the-counter medicines for symptom relief of coughs and fever. (Normal body temperature ranges 97 to 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit.)
- For more information on the flu go to www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm and www.vdh.virginia.gov/flu/ and www.cdc.gov/handwashing/.

I hope these few tips are helpful and that you “spread” this information and not the flu!!

To your health,

Monica Petrella RN