

4 Ways to Avoid Cold and Flu During the Holidays

ND Medina

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Around the holidays, cold and flu tend to have a nasty way of cropping up, destroying your holiday get-togethers with their unpleasant mix of symptoms. Over 100 different viruses can cause a cold, while the flu is caused by influenza virus A, B, or C, with types A or B responsible for the wide seasonal outbreaks every year.

Luckily, there are ways to protect yourself from cold and flu during the holiday season. Read on to find out how you can prevent yourself from the dreaded holiday cold and flu.

Get a flu vaccine

It's simple, it's easy, and in many pharmacies it's even free: the flu vaccine. Getting the flu shot is the #1 thing you can do to avoid getting the flu.

Because the flu vaccine changes every year, it's recommended to get the flu vaccine every year.



the flu season, but you can
weeks to start protecting you.

Patients age 65 or older can get a flu vaccine four times stronger than the regular flu shot, called the “high-dose flu vaccine.” Ask your doctor or pharmacist if this shot is available, as adults over age 65 are at higher risk for the flu.

“Make sure you’re up to date with all vaccinations: flu, pneumonia, etc,” recommends Stella Badalova, PharmD and Director of Healthcare Relations and Clinical Development at Medly Pharmacy.

The flu can be deadly even for people who are healthy. Protect yourself by getting that flu shot -- period.

Keep it hygienic

To destroy germs, you want to be cleaning, cleaning, cleaning. [According to Healthline](#), that means:

- Showering every day
- Wash your hands before eating or preparing food for at least twenty seconds in order to physically remove germs.
- Wash your hands before inserting contact lenses or performing any other activity that brings you in contact with the eyes or mouth.
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds and scrub under your fingernails.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Carry an alcohol-based hand cleaner for on-the-go use



via Unsplash



as keyboards, telephones,
doorknobs, and remote controls.

According to the UK's [National Health Service](#), the flu virus can stay alive on surfaces for 24 hours, so be diligent -- especially if you have a sick family member in the house. Wash shared items with hot water and soap, and use disposable plates, cups and silverware if you must.

Washing your hands regularly is especially critical. "The best way to avoid the cold and flu is to make sure you are washing your hands with soap and water," says Badalova.

Keep it moving

The health benefits of exercise go far beyond a nice figure. Regular exercise, [according to a study](#) in the journal *Neurologic Clinicians*, keeps chronic disease and inflammation at bay, reduces stress and the release of stress-related hormones, and increases disease-fighting white blood cells, which help fight off intruders such as the common cold.

[According to WebMD](#), another study found that post-menopausal women who exercised for a year had one-third the colds of those who did not. The exercise can be as simple and easy as going for fifteen-minute walks three times a week.

Rest, rest, rest



[According to a 2009 review](#) of 13 existing studies published in the journal *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, people who report psychological stress are less likely to develop protective antibodies in response to the flu vaccine.



study, this one published in
Annals of Internal Medicine,

suggests that getting enough sleep is super important if you've been exposed to a virus. In short, people who slept at least eight hours each night over a two-week period showed greater resistance to the virus, while those who slept seven hours or less were about three percent likelier to actually develop the virus after exposure.

This suggests that one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself from the flu is to be both physically and psychologically well-rested. Engage in self-care, avoid stressors, and make time for sleep to help your body shore up its defenses against cold and flu exposure.

A lot of the things you can do to protect yourself from cold and flu during the holiday season are healthy lifestyle changes that will pay off dividends far beyond simply avoiding the sniffles during family gatherings. With enough sleep, a healthy diet, attention to hygiene and more, you should be able to avoid colds and the flu not simply during the holiday season, but far beyond it.



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