



Keep Healthy All Winter Long

Relaxation is part of the prescription for good health. Find ways to relax by spending time with family and friends, watching a favorite movie, dancing to your favorite song or doing a few yoga moves.

The average adult catches two to four colds each year.* The cold virus thrives in the winter when humidity is low, and people are in closer contact with one another. While it may seem impossible to avoid getting sick, especially if you have children, you can take steps to keep yourself healthy and mitigate the symptoms of the cold and flu viruses.

*Source: Self, December 2009

Wash your hands. Lather your hands up with soap and wash them for at least 30 seconds, especially before eating and after using the restroom. And don't forget to scrub under your fingernails, where germs can linger.

If you've been sick, change your toothbrush. Germs often linger on the bristles and handle. Avoid getting sick again by using a new toothbrush.

Avoid the winter blahs with an extra dose of vitamin D, exercise or light therapy. Aim to get outside for 10 to 15 minutes each day, whether it's to shovel snow or go for a walk. If you live in an area where sunlight is limited for long periods in the winter, light therapy has been proven to help chase the blues.

Keep hydrated. Even if you're not thirsty, you should keep drinking water. Water flushes the toxins out of your system and helps your body carry nutrients to your cells.

Get a flu shot. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone over the age of six months should receive a flu shot, especially if you're pregnant, younger than 5 years of age or over 50 years of age, have certain chronic health conditions, live in a nursing home, or live with or care for any of these high risk populations. Many national drug store chains offer flu shots for a discounted fee.

Consider nasal irrigation. Neti pots and saline nasal sprays are often used to rinse allergens and mucous from the sinus cavity and keep congestion and infections at bay. If you use a neti pot, be sure to fill it with distilled, sterile or previously boiled water to prevent introducing infections into the sinuses.

8 Ways to Improve Your Indoor Air Quality Now

Bad indoor air can trigger coughing, chest tightness, sore throat, watery or itchy eyes, difficulty breathing and asthma attacks.

- 1 Keep your home clean.** Dusting, wiping down surfaces and vacuuming prevent allergens and pollutants from building up around the house.
- 2 Clean your air ducts** if you have forced-air heating.
- 3 Change the filters in your furnace** every 2 to 3 months, depending on usage.
- 4 Boost ventilation in your home** through trickle ventilation on your windows or doors, which allows fresh air to enter through a small opening, while filtering out harmful pollutants.
- 5 Use a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter** in your air conditioner or purchase a separate HEPA air cleaner to clean the air within a single room.
- 6 Vacuum your home twice a week** and be sure to include the carpet edges and upholstered furniture. For hard floors, use a mop and plain water to clean the floors once you've vacuumed.
- 7 Buy cleaners and paints** that have no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or are low-VOC.
- 8 Buy a house plant** to naturally purify indoor air and absorb pollutants.
- 9 Open a window or turn on the fan** while cooking on a gas stove. Gas stoves emit nitrogen dioxide, an irritant. Other appliances that release particulates into the air include space heaters, ranges, ovens, furnaces, fireplaces and water heaters.

Other Indoor Air Pollutants

Secondhand smoke is considered another indoor air pollutant; it contains nearly 4,000 chemicals including:

- Ammonia
- Butane
- Carbon monoxide
- Chromium
- Cyanide
- Formaldehyde
- Lead
- Polonium

Avoid these toxic chemicals and stop smoking. If you're not ready to kick the habit, take it outside.

