



## Cold & Flu Tips

Cold and flu season is in full swing. Most adults get sick once or twice a season, but if you have small kids in the house, it's even worse. Studies show your child could be coping with symptoms such as sniffles or fever six to ten times before the season is over.

How can you keep everyone else in the home healthy when one person is sick? Here's a simple prescription for health this cold and flu season.

### **Wash Your Hands the Right Way**

Wash your hands every chance you get for as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice. It's the single most effective way to keep from getting sick from any type of germ. Use warm water. Plain soap is fine. It's the act of rubbing your hands together that's most effective.

### **Don't Touch Your Nose or Face**

Most viruses are passed by contact with mucus fluids, so keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, and face. This tip is important throughout cold and flu season, but it's especially important directly after contact with a sick person.

### **Change Toothbrushes**

Change toothbrushes often -- every three months in general --and immediately after any sickness, or the sick person could become re-infected. Each family member should have their own color-coded toothbrush, stored at least an inch apart to avoid cross contamination.

### **Quarantine**

If possible, isolate the sick person in your family. For instance, sleep in a different bedroom, or have other siblings avoid your sick child's room. If you can't do that, then sleep with your back to the sick person.

### **Sanitize Common Areas**

Did you know the most common type of cold virus, the rhinovirus, can live on inanimate objects like telephones and stair railings for several hours, maybe even a few days? Using a disinfectant, sanitize areas that many people in your family touch: telephones, remote controls, computer keyboards, door knobs, refrigerator doors, sinks, etc.

### **Don't Share**

Obviously you don't want to eat or drink after a sick person. Consider color coding drinking glasses or using disposable ones for the duration of the sickness. Color coding is also a good idea for hand and bath towels, so that family members don't spread germs. And be sure to wash all towels, sheets, and linens more often during cold and flu season.

### **Jump-start Your Immune System**

Regular exercise, good nutritious meals, and plenty of sleep won't kill germs, but your immune system will be in a better position to fight them off if you're living in a healthy way. Consider adding a multivitamin if necessary. And last, but not least, check with your doctor about getting the flu vaccine. Flu is nothing to sneeze at -- it kills over 36,000 Americans every year.

