



Heart-Healthy Tips: Stay Clear of Cold and Flu

There are steps you can take during cold and flu season to keep your department, your family, and yourself healthy. These tips are courtesy of The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Ounce of Prevention campaign, which was created to give health educators and consumers practical and useful health tips. Remember, an ounce of prevention now can help ensure you are ready to take the next call.

Clean Hands

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It is best to wash your hands with soap and clean running water for 20 seconds. However, if soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product to clean your hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast-acting.

- ▶ You should wash your hands:
- ▶ Before preparing or eating food
- ▶ After going to the bathroom
- ▶ After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom
- ▶ Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- ▶ After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- ▶ After handling an animal or animal waste
- ▶ After handling garbage
- ▶ Before and after treating a cut or wound

Disinfect Surfaces

Cleaning removes germs from surfaces and disinfecting destroys germs on surfaces. Disinfecting after cleaning gives an extra level of protection from germs. Areas with the largest amounts of germs and frequently used areas - such as the kitchen and bathroom - should be disinfected with a bleach solution or another disinfectant as often as possible to avoid the spread of germs.

Prepare Food Safely

Handle and prepare food safely to prevent the spread of harmful bacteria and germs and reduce the risk of food borne illness. There are four simple daily practices to food safety and protection from food borne bacteria:

- ▶ Clean hands and surfaces often.
- ▶ Separate and don't cross-contaminate one food item with another.

Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at www.healthy-firefighter.org.

- ▶ Cook foods to proper temperatures by using a food thermometer and observing recommended internal cooking temperatures.
- ▶ Chill or refrigerate foods promptly by storing leftovers at a temperature of 40°F or below in the refrigerator and 0°F or below in the freezer.

Get Immunizations

Getting immunizations is an easy and low-cost way to save lives. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from certain viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus.

Get Smart

Many colds, sore throats, and the flu are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do not work on viruses. Antibiotics, when used appropriately, can treat certain bacterial infections. Taking antibiotics when you have a virus may do more harm than good and may increase your risk of getting an infection later that is resistant to antibiotic treatment.