

Don't Catch Them

There is an old saying that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". Modern medicine seems to be proving this true with greater regularity. One of the hottest topics in the news this past fall and winter is the seasonal Flu, the 2009 H1N1flu, the common cold and their prevention.

No one wants to get any of these illnesses; they're uncomfortable, inconvenient and in certain instances, deadly. Thankfully the human body has a built-in defense system: Immunity. This is the body's ability to detect, find and destroy pathogens; that is bacteria, viruses and other organisms that don't belong in the body and can cause many different kinds of illnesses.

Unfortunately, our immune system is not 100% effective; if it were no one would catch a cold or the flu. The best way to stay healthy overall, is to do all you can to help and boost your immune system. The following is a list of some ways to help keep you and your family healthy during the cold and flu season.

- Get the Shot- A seasonal influenza vaccination gives 70- 90% protection against infection and can reduce the severity and side effects if you do get the flu. The flu shot is recommended for adults 50 and older, children 6 months to 5 years and "anyone who wants to reduce the chance of getting the flu". The best way to determine if the vaccine is right for you and your family and which vaccine to get is to discuss this with your doctor; they know your history and family best.

Much of the same can be said of the 2009 H1N1 Flu vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that the following groups receive the vaccine:

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers and those households with children younger than six months
- All individuals from six months old to 24 years old
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

Again, consulting with your family doctor is the best way to determine the correct treatment for your family.

- Sanitize- Lots of research has been done and the findings all agree: When used correctly hand sanitizers eliminate nearly all germs. The correct way to use a sanitizer requires that enough gel be squirted into your hands so that they are still damp after 10- 15 seconds of rubbing them together. Another important factor when choosing a sanitizer is that it is made of at least 60% alcohol. This percentage of alcohol has been found to be very effective at killing most germs.
- Avoid Your Face- Bacteria and viruses need a way into the body in order to cause an illness and just sitting on your hands usually won't do the trick. The problem begins when you touch your eyes, nose or mouth. By not touching these areas you can help prevent the germs from getting into the body and causing an illness.

- Open Up! - Its no coincidence that when the temperature drops, the likelihood of catching a cold or the flu increases. Homes and businesses tend to keep doors and windows closed in cooler weather, trapping bacteria and viruses inside where they can thrive. It can be helpful to open doors or windows once a week (even in very cold temperatures) to allow fresh air in and force the stale, unhealthy air out.
- Use a Multi-Vitamin- This does not need to be some super high dose, expensive vitamin. These can be very damaging to the body if not taken correctly. All that is really needed is a once-a-day multivitamin with 100% of the recommended daily amounts of vitamins A, B6, B12, C and D and the minerals Chromium, copper, Folic Acid, Selenium, Calcium and Zinc. Taking the vitamin with a meal that contains some fat (toast with butter or a ham sandwich) will help your body absorb the vitamins and minerals better. It's important to take the vitamin with an 8oz glass of water to allow the pill to dissolve and be absorbed faster.
- Don't Share- This goes against everything your mother may have taught but sharing food, drinks or even a Chapstick with other people (even family members) can help to spread viruses and bacteria.
- Get to Sleep- Getting enough sleep during the cold and flu season is just about the most important type of prevention you can use. The other precautions you use like vaccines and vitamins, don't work very well if the body isn't rested enough to use them properly. Ideally, the body needs 7 ½ to 8 ½ hours sleep a night to function and protect itself most effectively.

If all these precautions fail and you become sick, the best thing to do is to stay home. This will help prevent the further spreading of the illness among coworkers as well as giving your body the rest it needs to fight the infection and get well.

For additional help with safety and OSHA compliance, take advantage of the resources available through NCMA. These resources include the NCMA Block Plant Safety Software. The software is available from NCMA at (703) 713-1900 at a cost of \$150 for up to 3 plants/year (nonmember \$450).