

# Quick Tips: Surviving Cold and Flu Season

With winter underway, it is important to prepare your workplace, home and family for the flu season. The flu season is October through May, with the peak of cases occurring in February each year.

The flu is a virus and is treated as a “droplet precaution” within healthcare settings, which means the sneeze or cough of an individual with the flu can spread it through airborne droplets. These droplets can stay in the air for several minutes, which creates the need for wearing a surgical mask, when coming within three feet of contact with someone who has the virus. These masks can often be found in hand washing stations while entering a healthcare setting, at the doorway of any precaution room, at the entrances of most airports and sometimes even in mall entranceways.

## PROTECTING AGAINST THE FLU

Below are a few quick tips to help protect yourself, your coworkers, and your family against the flu.

# 1

### Get the Flu Shot

Speak with your doctor about seeing if the flu shot is right for you. The flu shot cannot give you the flu, despite the local folklore or what you hear at the water cooler. Given there are a multitude of versions of the flu, your shot will typically protect against the few most common strands that are expected to be present in your geographic area. It is not a guarantee to prevent the flu, but it is an extremely effective tool in preventing rampant spread.

# 2

### Wash Your Hands

Throughout the day, wash your hands with warm soap and water. This is particularly important when entering and exiting high-traffic locations such as break rooms, lobbies, reception areas, conference rooms, waiting areas, patient and exam rooms in healthcare facilities, restrooms, etc. Always wash your hands thoroughly prior to eating any food.

# 3

### Do Not Share Food or Drinks

The flu is communicable, meaning it can be actively spread, prior to symptoms showing. This means you or someone else could actively have the flu and not even know it. Sharing cups, utensils and even food can easily spread the virus.

# 4

### Avoid Touching Your Eyes, Nose, or Mouth

After shaking hands with others, do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth until you have washed or sanitized your hands. These areas will allow the virus to quickly infect your body, so work hard to avoid them.

# 5

## Disinfect High-Touch Areas

Take the time to regularly disinfect high-touch areas in your home and workplace such as door handles, light switches, cabinet handles, sinks, soap dispensers, toilets, phones, keyboards, mouse, remote controls, food preparation areas, tables and chairs. Standard quat cleaners are not effective against all versions of the flu, so we would recommend using a tuberculocidal or disinfectant with multiple viral flu kill claims.

# 6

## Don't Spray and Wipe

Typically, people tend to clean by spraying on a disinfectant and wiping the surface very quickly. This is not effective as most disinfectants have dwell times, meaning the time required to sit on a surface to effectively kill the germs, of several minutes.

We recommend saturating a microfiber wipe and applying the solution directly to each surface. If the surface has soil, disinfect and remove the soil first, then apply the disinfectant to the surface again. The chemicals may not penetrate the soil to disinfect the surface, so ensure you reapply to be sure.

# 7

## Disinfect Shopping Carts

Most grocery stores and some shopping centers will have effective disinfectant disposable wipes at the entrance where you may liberally apply the wipes to the carts. Remember, not everyone has been as cautious as you.

## IF YOU GET THE FLU

We advise you to consult a doctor for medical advice, if you start experiencing flu-like symptoms, which can include:

- Pain in the muscles
- Cough, which can be dry or with phlegm
- Chills, dehydration, fatigue, fever, flushing, loss of appetite, body ache, or sweating
- Nasal congestion, runny nose, or sneezing
- Other common symptoms: chest pressure, head congestion, headache, nausea, shortness of breath, sore throat, or swollen lymph nodes

If you happen to get the flu, please do not go to work, school, or public areas. The best way to prevent the continual spread of the flu is to keep it out of high-traffic locations. You may be tougher than most, but others who could be exposed may not be. As always, we want everyone to be safe and healthy.

Learn more about our services, processes and procedures by emailing [info@smclean.com](mailto:info@smclean.com).