

## Cold and Flu Fighters

Cold and flu season are here once again. Many people use these terms interchangeably, however, they do differ in intensity. A cold generally starts off slow with minor sniffing, sneezing and a scratchy throat but the flu happens very quickly, and symptoms are usually more severe. The common cold and flu are both caused by viruses. Due to this, antibiotics are not effective and no cure exists. There are, however, a few things you can do to help “battle” these viruses.

- Drink plenty of fluids. Warm fluids may help soothe the throat as well as replace body fluids.
- Eat a nutritious, well balanced diet.
- Rest in bed the first day or two – this will help your immune system fight the virus.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after blowing your nose and before handling food.
- Use a humidifier. This may help to reduce upper respiratory tract discomfort.
- Use a nasal rinse such as Nasopure to help clean and sooth irritated nasal passages.
- Use over the counter drugs and herbal remedies with caution. Follow the directions on the label precisely and consult the pharmacist if you are using other medications.

You may be wondering, “So what can I do to help prevent a cold or flu?”

- Wash your hands. Scrub hands for 15-20 seconds. Frequent hand washing is the number one way to prevent a cold or the flu. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol base hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your hands nose or mouth. Germs spread this way!!
- Flu shot. The flu vaccine dramatically decreases your chances of falling victim to the flu. The flu shot is an inactivated vaccine, meaning you **will not** get the flu from it!!
- Keep your distance. If at all possible, try to limit your time with individuals who have a cold or the flu.
- If you are sick stay home! If you are sick with flu like illness, the CDC currently recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever has subsided.
- Finally, if your symptoms become worse, last for a prolonged period of time, you have difficulty breathing, have yellow or green sputum or a temperature higher than 104 degrees Fahrenheit, call your doctor.

Wondering where you can get a flu shot?

Employees and retirees can receive a flu shot for free through Employee Health.

Employees and dependents that are insured through the City of Columbia can receive a free flu shot through Walgreens Pharmacy. You must fill out a claim form (located on the intranet website [www.columbia.mo.gov/hr/#benefit](http://www.columbia.mo.gov/hr/#benefit)) and submit it to Walgreens at the time of vaccination.

