



Staying Healthy at Work

Workplace Wellness

To be well, we need to be healthy at work. But late hours, commuting long distances, and dealing with multiple people and tasks throughout the day can drain you. Add to that the stress of world events, especially ones like the recent coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and staying healthy can feel like an uphill battle.

The following information can help you stay healthy even at work.

What You Can Do

- **Wash your hands:** Do this before you eat and after using the restroom. Store a hand sanitizer at your desk for a quick fix on the go.
- **Keep your workspace clean:** Use antibacterial wipes periodically to disinfect your phone, keyboard or any tools that you use regularly. Pay special attention to materials that are shared with coworkers.
- **Drink water:** Staying hydrated throughout the day will help you stay alert and avoid headaches, muscle spasms and back pain. Drinking water can also aid in the reduction of hunger and maintenance of a healthy weight. Make it a goal to consume at least eight glasses of water a day.
- **Eat wisely:** Space your meals and snacks evenly throughout the day to avoid overeating and getting a sluggish 'food coma' effect. Instead of heading to the vending machine for sugary snacks that spike your blood sugar levels and cause you to crash later, choose protein-rich foods that metabolize slowly and keep you full longer. Do not be afraid to say no when a coworker brings donuts to work or offers tempting afternoon treats.
- **Take advantage of your breaks:** Use these time slots to take short walks and get fresh air. Slowly stretch your neck, shoulders and back for a soothing tension release.
- **Watch your posture:** Check the position of your shoulders and back, especially at the end of your work day. If they start to slouch or lean forward, straighten them by aligning your ears, shoulders and hips. Although this might feel uncomfortable at first, you will avoid the painful and sometimes debilitating effects of long-term bad posture.
- **Stop smoking:** Not only will you reap health benefits from eliminating tobacco and nicotine from your body, you will also be more productive without having to leave work frequently to satisfy cravings.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.samhsa.gov
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: www.osha.gov
- National Women's Health Information Center: <http://womenshealth.gov>

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizers

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps a person can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. It is best to wash hands with soap and running water for 20 seconds. If soap or clean, running water are not available, use an alcohol-based product containing at least 60 percent alcohol to clean hands. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are fast-acting and significantly reduce the number of many types of germs on the skin. However, they will not kill all germs.

When to Wash Hands

- Before and after preparing food
- After handling uncooked meat and poultry
- Before and after eating food
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- Before and after tending to someone who is sick
- After blowing one's nose, coughing or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound

Washing with Soap and Water

- Wet hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds. (Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.)
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Using an Alcohol-based Hand Rub

Apply product to the palm of one hand, using the amount of product indicated on the label.

Rub hands together.

Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

Resources

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Is hand sanitizer effective in removing germs?

In general, washing hands with soap and water is the best method for removing germs. However, if soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer can be used in most situations.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hand sanitizers with an alcohol concentration between 60-95% are more effective at removing germs in comparison to sanitizers with lower amounts of alcohol or no alcohol at all. Non-alcohol based sanitizers:

- May not be as effective at removing certain types of germs.
- May cause germs to become resistant to the sanitizer.
- May only reduce germ growth instead of actually destroying germs.
- May be more likely to aggravate skin.

Alcohol-based sanitizers can rapidly reduce the amount of germs on the hands. However, regardless of the alcohol content, hand sanitizer does not remove all types of germs. This is because most people do not use enough sanitizer or may remove the sanitizer before it has completely dried.

It is also important to keep in mind that sanitizers may not be as effective at removing germs from visibly soiled hands, such as after gardening or handling food. In these types of situations, it is recommended to wash the hands with soap and water.

Hand sanitizers are also not effective in removing harmful chemicals. One should carefully use soap and water to clean the hands after handling any type of chemical.

The information on this page was gathered from an article by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You can access their website here: www.cdc.gov

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – When and How to Use Hand Sanitizer: <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>
- Health.gov: www.health.gov
- MedlinePlus – Germs and Hygiene: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/germsandhygiene.html>

When should I call in sick to work?

Many people head into work when they are very sick. Going to the office with the flu or other ailments may do more harm than good for your co-workers as well as yourself.

While you might be hesitant to call in sick to work, consider everyone involved. Here are some tips to help you discern whether to take a sick day or not.

Will you be a danger to others?

If you have a job that requires you to drive or operate equipment, you could put yourself or others in a dangerous position if your mental sharpness is compromised.

Maybe you have only sinus pain, sniffing or a cough. Those ailments would not make you dangerous, but if you take an over-the-counter medication, it could cause drowsiness or put you in a mental fog. Medications marked non-drowsy affect every person differently, and may also hinder your productivity. In the case that you have an earache, your balance or concentration can be severely affected.

Are you contagious?

A lot of diseases are contagious before you even realize you are feeling sick. Thus, it is important to practice personal hygiene (such as frequently washing hands) and avoid personal contact (such as shaking hands) during the cold and flu season. It is also good to disinfect office equipment such as phones and keyboards that are used by multiple workers.

People who work in environments such as nursing homes, day care centers and other places with people who are more susceptible to catching diseases should be conscious of how a minor illness can be debilitating to another person.

- If your nose and sinuses are stuffy, you have a productive cough and feel achy and tired, you most likely have a cold. You might also be running a low-grade fever as well. When you have a cold like this, it's best to stay home. You are contagious. Additionally, if you find you have chills or sweats, your fever is higher. So rest and drink fluids (the fever will dehydrate you) and stay out of the office until you are feeling better.
- Coughing alone does not mean you should stay home. However, you should contact your doctor if the coughing lasts more than a couple of days. Depending on the type of cough, it could be something like postnasal drip, which is not contagious. However, postnasal drip can develop into bronchitis or pneumonia which does put others at risk.
- If your fever and sore throat linger, visit the doctor's office to test for strep throat. This is highly contagious.
- Pinkeye is when your eyes are red and they secrete a discharge that makes your eyelashes feel sticky. Pinkeye isn't more contagious than a cold; it just looks worse. It's a good idea to skip work, visit the doctor for antibiotic drops and wash your hands often. You can return to work in a day or two.
- Many people will take over-the-counter medications and head into work even if they have been vomiting or have diarrhea. In order to protect others from getting sick, you should stay off the clock between 24 and 48 hours, drink lots of fluids and call a doctor if your symptoms worsen.
- It is tough to know whether a rash is contagious or not. If you are certain the outbreak is an allergic reaction to food, poison ivy or oak, you may be uncomfortable but not contagious. Going to work is ok. However, if you are not sure of the origin of the rash, it is good to have it checked by a doctor.

[Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.](#)

Are you going to be productive?

Even if your illness cannot be transmitted to others, you might head back to the office too soon and get even sicker. If you know you will not be productive, take the time off to recover. Showing up just to show up doesn't make you more of a team player.

- Earaches without other symptoms are not usually contagious. However, you should go to the doctor if the pain does not subside. It could be an infection in your throat, sinuses or jaw instead. In any case, the pain caused by an earache can be quite distracting. Most likely, you'll spend more time paying attention to how much it hurts (or trying to alleviate the pain) than you will working. Take a day off and attend to the issue instead of toughing it out on the job.
- Having a headache is not problematic. A migraine, however, is almost impossible to work with. In addition to the pain, your sensitivity to light and noise makes it hard to get any work done. Stay home if you have this kind of pain in the morning. Consider leaving work if the pain arises during work hours.
- Whether you have a desk job or one that requires long hours of standing or physical work, having back pain can cause great problems. Pay attention to your body and your pain level. Back pain, if left untreated, often gets worse. Take a day off to rest or to see your physician.
- If you injure a limb with a sprain or break, determining whether you should return to work depends on the type of position you have. If you are required to stand or do physical activity with the arm or leg that is hurt, you may have to go on disability until it heals. For people with desk jobs, if you are still able to be productive in the workplace, it could be helpful to bring ice packs or pillows to help relieve inflammation. Otherwise, take a few days off until you feel comfortable enough to focus on your duties.

Resources

- National Institutes of Health (NIH): <http://nih.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

Understanding Influenza and How to Avoid It

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses. It can mild or severe, and can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. Every year in the United States, on average, 5 to 20 percent of the population gets the flu; more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and approximately 36,000 people die from complications. In a time when symptoms of seasonal flu, or even the common cold, can be mistaken for the much more dangerous COVID-19, it's important to understand the difference in symptoms caused by each.

Flu Symptoms and Complications

Symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches

For COVID-19, serious symptoms tend to mimic severe flu, including:

- Fever (usually high)
- Cough
- Chills

Differences for COVID-19 include:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Many people have also reported a loss of taste and/or smell

If you fear you may have COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control offers a symptom self-check at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

How Flu Spreads

The flu spreads in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person, although occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before getting symptoms and up to seven days after getting sick. That means that you can give someone the flu before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick.

Preventing the Flu

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. There also are certain good health habits that can help prevent infection. In addition, antiviral medications may be used.

The following health habits may also reduce your risk of getting the flu:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

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Common Cold

A cold is the most common illness suffered by people. More than 200 viruses are known to cause colds, and symptoms can range from coughing and sneezing to fevers, runny noses and sore throats.

While there is no cure for the common cold, there are many products and treatments that successfully address cold symptoms. In a time when symptoms of the common cold or seasonal flu can be mistaken for the much more dangerous COVID-19, it's important to know the difference in symptoms caused by each.

For colds, symptoms tend to be milder, fever-free and, generally, include:

- Sneezing
- Body aches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat

For COVID-19, symptoms tend to include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Many people have also reported a loss of taste and/or smell

If you fear you may have COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control offers a symptom self-check at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Cause

More than 200 different viruses are known to cause symptoms of the common cold. Some of the viruses seldom produce serious illnesses. The same viruses that produce colds in adults appear to cause colds in children. Some of these viruses produce mild infections in adults but can lead to severe lower respiratory tract infections in young children.

Rhinoviruses cause an estimated 30 to 35 percent of all adult colds, and are most active in early fall, spring and summer. Scientists have identified more than 110 distinct rhinovirus types. These agents grow best at temperatures of about 91 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature inside the human nose.

Approximately 10 to 15 percent of adult colds are caused by viruses also responsible for other, more severe illnesses. In addition, the causes of 30 to 50 percent of adult colds (presumed to be viral) remain unidentified.

There is no evidence that people catch colds from exposure to cold weather or from getting chilled or overheated. There is also no evidence that a person's chances of getting a cold are related to factors such as exercise, diet or enlarged tonsils or adenoids. On the other hand, research suggests that psychological stress and allergic diseases affecting the nose or throat may have an impact on a person's chances of getting infected by cold viruses.

Frequency of Occurrence

According to some estimates, people in the United States and Canada suffer over one billion colds every year.

Children have about six to 10 colds a year. One important reason why colds are so common in children is because they are often in close contact with each other in daycare centers and schools. In families with children in school, the number of colds per child can be as high as 12 a year.

Adults average about two to four colds a year, although the range varies widely. Women, especially those aged 20 to 30 years, have more colds than men, possibly because of their closer contact with children. On average, people older than 60 years of age normally have one cold each year.

Transmission

In the United States, most colds occur during the fall and winter. Beginning in late August or early September, the rate of colds increases slowly for a few weeks and remains high until March or April, when it declines. The seasonal variation may relate to the opening of schools and to cold weather, which prompts people to spend more time indoors and increases the chances that viruses will spread from person to person.

Seasonal changes in relative humidity also may affect the prevalence of colds. The most common cold-causing viruses survive better when humidity is low—the colder months of the year. Cold weather also may make the inside lining of the nose drier and more vulnerable to viral infection.

People can get infected by cold viruses by either of these methods:

- Touching skin or environmental surfaces (such as telephones, doorknobs and stair rails) that have cold germs on them and then touching the eyes or nose
- Inhaling air that contains drops of mucus and cold germs

Symptoms and Signs

Symptoms of the common cold usually begin two to three days after infection and often include:

- Mucus buildup in the nose
- Difficulty breathing through the nose
- Swelling of the sinuses
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Headache

Fevers are usually slight but can climb to 102 degrees Fahrenheit in infants and young children. Cold symptoms can last from two to 14 days, but most people recover in a week. If symptoms recur often or last much longer than two weeks, patients might have an allergy rather than a cold.

Colds occasionally can lead to bacterial infections of the middle ear or sinuses, requiring treatment with antibiotics. High fever, significantly swollen glands, severe sinus pain and a cough that produces mucus may indicate a complication or more serious illness requiring a visit to a healthcare provider.

Treatment

There is no cure for the common cold, but people can get relief from cold symptoms by:

- Resting in bed
- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Gargling with warm salt water or using throat sprays or lozenges for a scratchy or sore throat
- Using petroleum jelly for a raw nose
- Taking aspirin or acetaminophen—Tylenol, for example—for headache or fever

A word of caution: Several studies have linked aspirin use to the development of Reye's syndrome in children recovering from flu or chickenpox. Reye's syndrome is a rare but serious illness that usually occurs in children between three and 12 years of age. It can affect all organs of the body but most often the brain and liver.

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While most children who survive an episode of Reye's syndrome do not suffer any lasting consequences, the illness can lead to permanent brain damage or death.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children and teenagers not be given aspirin or medicine containing aspirin when they have any viral illness such as the common cold.

Never take antibiotics to treat a cold because antibiotics do not kill viruses. People should use these prescription medicines only if they have rare bacterial complications such as sinusitis or ear infection. In addition, people should not use antibiotics "just in case," because they will not prevent bacterial infections.

Nonprescription antihistamines may provide some relief from symptoms such as runny nose and watery eyes, which are symptoms commonly associated with colds.

Nonprescription cold remedies, including decongestants and cough suppressants, may relieve some of cold symptoms but they will not prevent or even shorten the length of a cold.

People should be careful when taking these medications because most of them have some side effects such as:

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Insomnia
- Upset stomach

Questions have been raised about the safety of nonprescription cold medicines in children and whether the benefits justify any potential risks from the use of these products in children, especially in those under two years of age.

A Food and Drug Administration panel recommended that nonprescription cold medicines not be given to children under six years of age because cold medicines do not appear to be effective for these children and may not be safe.

Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health: www.nlm.nih.gov
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: www.fda.gov



Coping with a Crisis

During a personal crisis, some people are more capable of bouncing back than others. That's due to their resilience. Resilience is about more than coping; it's about confronting crises without being overwhelmed. Resilient people are better able to handle life's stressors and adapt to changing situations. You can develop resilience by improving self-esteem, cultivating a strong system of social support and taking care of your physical and mental health. Here are some other tips for resilience in the face of crisis:

Maintain Strong Connections With Family and Friends

Having strong, positive relationships provides support that can help you weather tough times.

Avoid Viewing Problems as Insurmountable

Learn from past experiences and be confident that you will get through current ones, too.

Accept That Change is Part of Living

Accepting change makes it easier to move forward with your life.

Keep a Long-term Perspective and Hopeful Outlook

Set goals for yourself so that you have a direction for your future.

Take Care of Your Physical and Mental Health

It's especially important when you are feeling stressed to continue to eat a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and regular exercise.

Get Support and Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

If you need help dealing with a personal crisis, contact your GuidanceResources Employee Assistance Program for confidential counselling and other services

ARE YOU STRESSED???

To a certain degree, feeling stressed is a normal, healthy response to life's events and challenges. However, prolonged stress can have adverse effects on your health and general well-being.

Conditions linked to stress include:

- Migraines and headaches
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Diabetes
- Asthma

Behavioral symptoms include:

- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of concentration
- Substance abuse

8 Tips for Beating Stress



Laugh and Learn

Instead of getting irritated, laugh at life's annoyances and learn from your mistakes.



Identify the Causes

Is it traffic? Problems at work? Bad news on the TV? What stresses you out?



Keep a Schedule

Allow ample time for travel and schedule free time for yourself.



Focus on the Positive

Be proud of your accomplishments and celebrate your successes.



Get Enough Sleep and Exercise

Exercise not only improves health and mood, it aids in better sleep.



Meditate

By sitting in a quiet environment and closing your eyes you can achieve relaxation.



Do Things You Enjoy

Make and take time to do activities that bring you pleasure.



Nurture Relationships

More interpersonal contact with the right people can help relieve stress.



Keeping Stress Levels in Check

Resiliency and stress are intertwined. The more resilient we are, the better able we are to deal with stress, but the more stressed we are, the less resilient we become. That's why keeping stress levels in check is key to building and maintaining our resilience. Here are a few tips for managing stress:

- **Get enough rest.** Doctors recommend seven to eight hours of sleep a night for adults.
- **Exercise regularly.** Swimming, running, brisk walking, aerobic exercises and other repetitive fitness activities are especially beneficial. Experts recommend exercising at least 20 to 30 minutes three to five times a week.
- **Engage in fulfilling activities.** Take a little time each day for something you like to do: a hobby, a walk with your partner, an hour with a good book or a home-improvement project.
- **Avoid caffeine, nicotine and other stimulants.** These common drugs can induce stress and anxiety. A simple step like switching to decaffeinated coffee can have a real effect on your stress level.
- **Avoid alcohol, tranquilizers and recreational drugs.** These may contribute to anxiety and depression and an increased sense of loss of control.