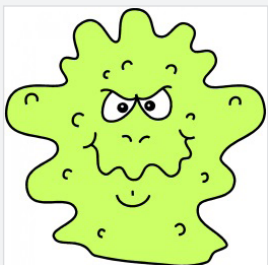


Topic: Germs, Germs, Everywhere!

Maybe you feel a scratchy throat and a stuffy nose coming on. Whatever the symptoms, you could expect a lot of sniffles and coughs this fall/winter, particularly if you have school-aged children.



Before the virus knocks you and your family out, try these tips to prepare for colds and flu. If you're lucky, they may also prevent at least some of your family from getting sick.

1. **Stock up on supplies.** Be ready before cold and flu season starts. Load up on tissues, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and paper towels. Consider picking up a few distractions in case your kids get sick, like puzzles, coloring books, or DVDs.
2. **Check your medicine cabinet.** Make sure it contains pain relievers, fever reducers, and any other medications you use when your family is fighting colds or flu, like decongestants or cough syrups. Test your thermometer to make sure the batteries still work. Clean your humidifier.

3. **Be strict about washing hands.**

Germie hands spread colds and the flu. Tell your family to scrub their hands well with soap for 20 seconds. Tell kids to wash for as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice. Make sure you do it, too!



4. **Set up sanitizer stations.**

Put a bottle of hand sanitizer in every room. Make sure it's at least 60% alcohol. Use a squirt as you pass by — and get everyone else to do the same.

5. **Plan for sick days.** You may need some days off. Even if you don't get sick, you may need to take care of your sick kids. Start thinking about it now: What's your employers' policy for sick days? Will you have to take unpaid days off?

6. **Line up support.**

You may need outside help. See if any family members can watch the kids if they're home sick from school. Or ask a neighbor if they can take the kids to soccer and dance if you're laid up in bed.

7. **Disinfect.** You don't need to spend all day spraying every surface with disinfectant. You may just want to disinfect some heavily touched items — like doorknobs, remote controls, and phones — each day.

8. **Switch to paper goods.** If everyone's sick, use paper towels instead of hand towels in the bathroom. Switch out glasses for paper cups, and toss them after one use. You'll be less likely to swap germs.
9. **Fill the fridge and pantry.** Stock up on some easy-to-make foods for lunches and dinners, in case you need a few days to rest and recover without cooking. Have some favorite drinks and snacks on hand for your kids. Include some (healthy) comfort foods like chicken soup and PB&J.
10. **Rest.** Whether you're trying to recover from a cold or flu, or trying to avoid it, get plenty of sleep. Get your kids to bed on time, too.
11. **Get your flu shot.** One of the best ways to help keep the flu away from your house is to make sure your whole family gets vaccinated.

