



# COLDS & FLUS

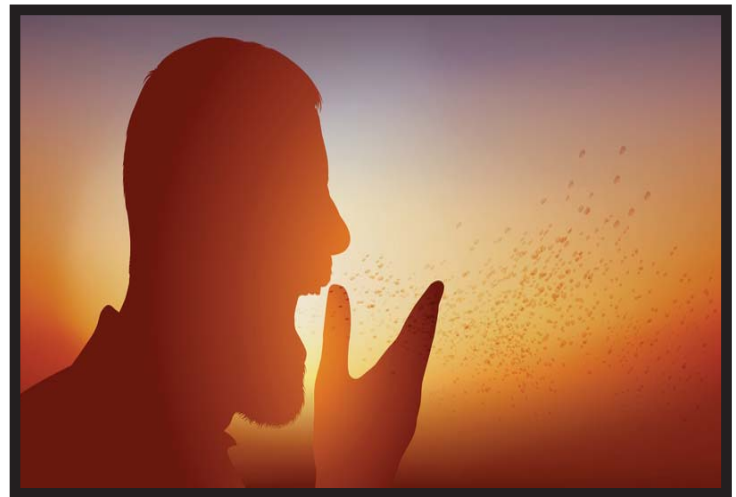
INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON COMBATING VIRUSES

## WHAT CAUSES COLDS AND FLUS?

Both the common cold and the flu are caused by the same thing- a virus. They are from different viral families, the common cold from rhinoviruses and the flu from the influenza viruses. This includes Covid-19 (Coronavirus), H1N1, MERS, and SARS to name a few. There are many other families of viruses that cause similar illnesses, the difference is some viral families more often cause severe health effects that can be fatal if someone has a suppressed immune system or chronic breathing problem. Regardless of the family, they are all spread in similar ways.

## HOW DOES ONE GET INFECTED?

The illnesses that viruses cause trigger the body to force them out by coughing and sneezing. They travel on droplets through the air and land on surfaces waiting for the next person to inhale them or touch the surface, and then touch a place on their face (eyes, nose or mouth), where they can live, reproduce and start the cycle again. Because there is no way to eliminate them, (they also infect animals like birds, pigs, horses, dogs and cats), the life cycle must be broken to prevent their spread.



## WHY DO WE GET SICK MORE OFTEN IN WINTER?

Cold and flu season happens in winter when the humidity is down. This allows droplets to travel farther, stay suspended longer, giving them more time to infect another person.



# TIPS FOR PREVENTION

- **Healthy Hands:** The best way to help prevent the spread of these and other illnesses is by regular hand washing. Wash your hands after any interaction with a sick person or surfaces they contact. If you are sick wash your hands after coughing, sneezing or wiping you nose. Washing with soap and water is best. If you use hand sanitizer, make sure they contain at least 60% alcohol. Make sure to moisturize your hands to prevent cracking, another place viruses can enter. If you are caring for a sick person, you could also wear surgical type gloves, remove them carefully, dispose of them properly and wash your hands.
- **Raise the Humidity:** Higher humidity keeps your mucous membranes wet, allowing them to better block the viruses. A NIOSH study showed that raising humidity from 23% to 43% decreased the number of viruses that could cause infection from 77% to 14% after one hour, with most inactivated in the first 15 minutes.
- **Up Your Immunity:** Your immune system can fight off infections caused by viruses. Exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and having a good diet helps strengthen your immune system. Vaccinations can also help your immune system to prevent or reduce the severity of illnesses when well matched to the viruses.
- **Scrub the Surfaces:** If you are with someone that is sick keep the surfaces near them (within 3 feet) clean. Use a disinfectant wipe or cleaner on surfaces they regularly touch.
- **Keep in the Clear:** Viruses only fly a limited distance through the air. The CDC says that viruses normally travel about 3 feet, and some go 6 feet. Maintaining that distance from a sick person can prevent inhaling the viruses. An N95 or higher respirator can also provide protection. Surgical masks do not effectively filter viruses from the air.
- **Contain Your Coughs (and Sneezes):** If you are sick take measures to stop the droplets from spreading. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or onto a tissue. You can wear a surgical type mask to catch the droplets you cough or sneeze out. Properly handle and dispose of the masks to prevent them from causing infection.

For more information and resources visit:

[www.cseany.org/safety](http://www.cseany.org/safety)



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CSEA has been winning the fight for safe and healthy working conditions for over 100 years, yet there is more to be done. Hazards old and new- from Asbestos to Zika- remain a threat to workers every day. CSEA will not back down from the fight and nothing is more important than saving lives and keeping workers free from injury. Your help is needed now more than ever.

*The life you save could be YOUR OWN.*



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