

Keep Winter Illnesses At Bay

Colds and flu – no big deal, right? They usually don't last a really long time or cause serious problems.

Colds can plague you with everything from a stuffy and runny nose to a scratchy throat and watery eyes – and nonstop sneezing. Flu bugs bring symptoms that can look a lot like a cold. But the flu tends to ambush you suddenly, last longer, and pile on other "treats" such as fever, fatigue, headache, chills, and achiness.

Some people who get the flu, though, are at risk for pretty serious health problems. In fact, flu-related complications send more than 200,000 Americans to the hospital each year with thousands dying. Even the common cold takes a toll, accounting for 22 million lost school days in the U.S. each year.

Prevention is looking better and better, isn't it?

The number-one thing you can do to prevent the flu? Get a flu vaccine, which protects against the three most likely flu viruses to strike each season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends that everyone six months and older get a flu vaccine. Get the vaccine as soon as it is available if you are at high risk – you are pregnant, 65 or older, or have a chronic disease. It's also more important if you are a health care worker or care for someone who is at increased risk.

Available as a shot or nasal spray, the flu vaccine is best received in October or November, although you may still benefit in December or January. Ask your doctor or me if you have questions about this.

Colds and flu are spread mostly by droplets in the air or by touching a contaminated surface, then touching your eyes or nose. So some other simple steps may go a long way toward helping you prevent these common diseases.

Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for about 15 to 20 seconds. If you're away from soap and water, an alcohol-based hand rub will do. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose as much as you can. No free rides for these germs! Set a good example for your kids and encourage them to do the same. Also, try to limit being around people who are infected.

Are you sneezing or coughing? You know the drill: Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue, then throw it in the trash. If there's no tissue in sight, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve. Be sure to pass this tip on to your kids. If you've got a fever, stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone – that is, gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.

December Specials

Buy any Rx Solutions skin care product during the month of December and get the second product 15% off!! Stop by our West Columbia location for more info.

Hawthorne Medical Equipment will have Lifesource manual blood pressure monitors at a special low price of \$30 during the month of December. Monitors are available with a medium or large cuff and come with a lifetime warranty. For more details visit one of our medical equipment locations located at 1506 Taylor Street, Columbia or 2854 Sunset Boulevard in West Columbia.

Lighten Up Your Holiday Recipes Without Sacrificing Taste

You don't have to pack on any extra pounds this holiday season. Follow these simple steps to cut calories in your favorite holiday treats.

- Replace all or some of white flour in recipes with whole wheat flour. Compared with ¼ cup of white flour, each ¼ cup of whole-wheat flour adds 3.5 grams of fiber, various phytochemicals, and double the amount of magnesium and selenium. The extra fiber helps slow digestion and increase fullness.
- Replace half the sugar in your recipe with a lower calorie sugar alternative like stevia or xylitol or, you can sometimes cut the sugar by ¼ and the recipe will still work out. Cutting just ¼ cup of sugar can save a total of 192 calories.
- Use an egg substitute and save 45 calories, 5 grams of fat, and 1.6 grams of saturated fat, and 213 mg of cholesterol for each egg you replace.
- Use fat-free sour cream, low-fat yogurt, applesauce, or light cream cheese in place of half the butter.
- Use the lower sugar, lower fat versions of ingredients like cheese, jams, sour cream, etc.
- When recipes call for chocolate chips, frosting, or other embellishments simply reduce the amount you use.
- Use cocoa to add chocolate flavor to bakery recipes instead of chocolate chips or squares.
- Boost flavor with citrus zest.
- Use cooking spray and non-stick pans.

Reference:

"10 Ways to Cut Calories in Baking Recipes" by Elaine Magee, MPH, RD <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=78682>

Happy Holidays from your friends at Hawthorne Pharmacy