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Keep Your Cold to Yourself

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With winter coming and COVID-19 still in full swing, it will be even more important for everyone to **KEEP THEIR COLD TO THEMSELVES.**

Coughing, sneezing, body aches – all symptoms of the “common cold” and symptoms many of us will be all too familiar with this winter. While no one intentionally tries to share cold germs with co-workers, friends and family, we often do so without realizing it. However, whether you’re at home, work, or play there are several key steps that can be taken to help make the cold a little less common for everyone this winter.

Stay home if possible

While you may be hesitant to take time off from work, especially for something as seemingly trivial as a cold, working while ill makes you less productive and you’re likely to spread germs to co-workers. If possible, stay home from work, rest, and drink plenty of fluids. Not only will you have a quicker recovery, but you’ll be more productive when you do return to work and your co-workers will thank you for it.

For many of us, staying at home is simply not an option. We all have various responsibilities and some of them may be unavoidable. However, whether you’re at a staff meeting, working on an important project, grocery shopping, or picking your child up from school or day-care, by following some simple steps you can help limit the germs you may inadvertently spread while doing so.

1. **Wash your hands.** Rinse, soap, lather, rinse – for a full 20 seconds.
2. **Always use a tissue.** One of the easiest ways to spread germs is by sneezing. Make sure to always use a tissue and wash or disinfect your hands right away.
3. **Don’t sneeze into your hands.** In those moments when a cough or sneeze catches you off guard without a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve. This way you’ll be less likely to transfer germs to the next surface you touch.
4. **Skip the pleasantries.** You may feel uncomfortable not shaking someone’s hand or not giving a hug, but if you explain that you’re sick and don’t want to contaminate the person, he/she will most likely be grateful you didn’t.
5. **Keep your children at home.** Children in close quarters very often share germs. Hygiene is not usually as important to kids as it is to adults. Keep your kids home from school or day-care if they’re feeling under the weather.
6. **Keep your hands to yourself.** Use caution when eating buffet style, opening doors, borrowing pens, or using the office phone.

7. **Pass on “pass the baby.”** While some people may think that exposing children to common illnesses will build a child’s immunity, it’s almost guaranteed that his or her mother won’t feel the same way. If you are ill, keep a wide berth between you and anyone at high risk of getting sick, including young children and the elderly.

8. **Wear a mask or face covering.** Masks and face coverings need to be worn to help protect others from you. If face coverings are worn properly, we will reduce the amount of contaminants that enter the air when we cough or sneeze. This in turn will help protect those around us from catching what we have.

9. **Avoid close contact.** Try to maintain a six foot distance from those who are sick inside your home. When outside your home, try to maintain a six foot distance between yourself and people who don’t live in your household.

What if you’re the one getting sneezed on?

You may not be sick and would like to avoid someone else’s cold without appearing rude. Thankfully, there are some steps you can take to prevent illness.

For example, if someone you suspect of having a cold extends his/her hand to shake, politely decline and explain that you’re trying to avoid illness. Simple decline and say, “I’m trying not to get sick I’ve got [fill in the blank] coming up.” Humanizing your effort will make the individual less likely to take offense. By offering a logical, understandable reason for not shaking his or her hand, you’re less likely to offend and more likely to remain healthy.

If you’re around someone who is sick and not practicing proper cold etiquette, drop a hint by politely offering him or her some hand sanitizer and/or a tissue. Make sure you keep hand sanitizer on hand and within easy reach.

Take extra precautions when you are in public or with a person who is feeling under the weather. Wash your hands frequently, don’t touch your eyes, nose, or mouth, and be careful to practice good hygiene. Most public restrooms have a garbage can that is close enough to the door so patrons can use a paper towel to open the door before throwing the paper towel away.

Remember it is ok to be selfish when you are suffering from a cold. Do not share! Keep it to yourself and your family, co-workers, and friends will be very grateful that you did.

