SHARE THE WELLNESS TIP

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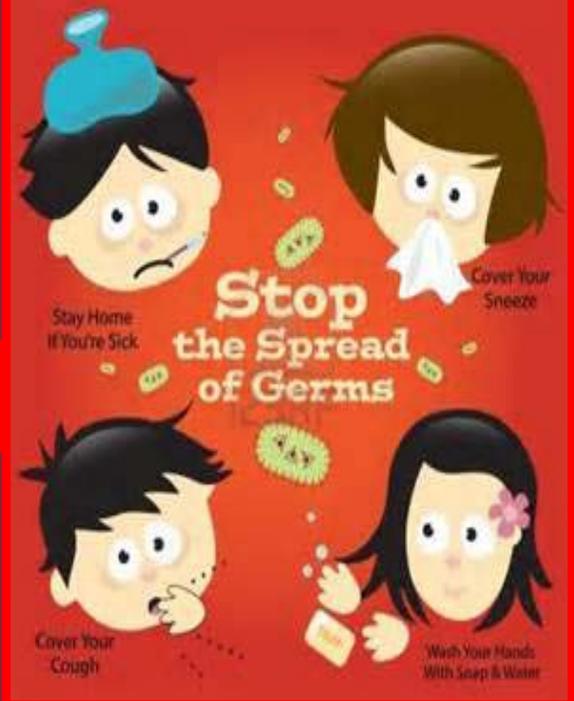## February 20, 2015

Protecting Yourself From The Cold And Flu Viruses

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently declared a flu epidemic. While the current flu season is in full swing, there are still steps you can take to help protect yourself from the cold and flu viruses.

Different Viruses, Different Symptoms
Colds and the flu do have a lot in common. They both can cause coughing, a runny nose, sneezing and watery eyes. But they aren't the same.

A cold usually:
- Causes symptoms two to three days after infection
- Lasts a week
- Causes headache or only a mild fever

However, the flu often:
- Comes on quickly
- Lasts as long as two to three weeks
- Raises your temperature to 100 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit
- Causes a headache, as well as other aches and pains

There is no medicine to cure a cold, but bed rest, drinking fluids and using a humidifier can help tame symptoms.

If you think you might have the flu, however, don't go it alone. See your doctor. This is especially important if you are in a high-risk group (young children, people over 65, pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions). Visit the CDC's website for a full list of high-risk groups.

When It's Something More Serious
Occasionally, a cold or flu can lead to another type of lung infection, such as bacterial pneumonia. This can be mild or quite serious. See your doctor right away for treatment if you have signs of pneumonia, including a high fever, "shaking" chills, chest pain when you cough or breathe, or cold or flu symptoms that suddenly get worse.

Guard Your Health
You can give viruses the slip in the months to come by following these tips:
- Get a flu vaccine. If you haven't gotten one yet, now's the time.
- Cut your risk of germs by washing your hands often. Lather up with soap and warm water for 15 seconds every time.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Use common sense; try to avoid sick people.
- Take care of your body. Eat well, exercise regularly, get enough sleep and keep your stress in check.
- Don't smoke.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Washington Post, Dec. 31, 2014