

Common Illnesses

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There are a myriad of ailments that we all get from time to time. Most of these are, but simple but can turn ugly fast without proper care. Many of them have no real cure, just doctors who prescribe drugs to stop the symptoms. There is no substitute for the Human immune system, though, and once you've beaten a disease once you'll be less susceptible to it later. However, if home remedies don't work or you develop an allergic reaction, you should see a professional.

Rules for Illness

There are some common sense rules for every illness that should be followed:

- **Stay warm.**- Cold weakens your system, and generally makes the illness that much more unpleasant. Bundle up, keep the heat on or the fire going, and eat lots of hot nutritious foods.
- **Stay Dry.**- Dampness promotes growth of molds on the walls and in your stuff, it also robs you of warmth even in bed, try to find a reasonably dry place to sit out your illness and keep your place clean and dry if possible, air out your room every day to get rid of the damp boggy air. It might be you are in an overly dry room, this is a problem too, set a pot of water near your heater or hang a damp towel over your radiator.
- **Stay home.**- We understand that this is difficult, if not impossible for some people. Employers hate it when people call in sick, and this can lose you a job if you're not careful. A good rule of thumb is that if you're in the food service industry and have a fever, you are infecting everyone who eats what your restaurant serves. Remind your employer of this. When vomit enters the picture, most employers will send you home anyway to avoid a potentially disgusting scene. If there is absolutely no chance of staying home, many employers will tell you to take it easy. If they ask for a doctor's note, you may have to go in. If so, play up the sick person role. If you look like the living dead, you're likely to be sent home. Remember that no employer worth his stars wants sick customers or employees. You can always offer to breathe/vomit on your employer. This is surprisingly effective.
- **Eat up.**- You probably won't be hungry, but you need your strength to fight the disease. Avoid junk foods like the plague, but get lots of proteins and vitamins. Vegetables and meats (or other proteins for our vegetarian brothers and sisters) are key.
- **Go to bed.**- Once you are home, sleep as much as you can and lounge around. If you have chores and homework to consider, do the absolute minimum and go back to sleep. It's likely you won't have much energy anyway, but don't force yourself to be up and about. Your life is best put on hold for a few days.
- **Antibiotics are a LAST RESORT!**- Don't use these unless nothing else is working. If you have to use them, use everything that the doctor gives you even if you start feeling better. The stronger bacteria take longer to kill, and if you don't use the whole prescription they'll be the ones that survive and breed into a resistant disease. Antibiotics breed stronger diseases, and kill the good bacteria in your body, weakening your natural defenses. This holds true for those antibiotic soaps and lotions, too. Avoid them.
- **Get it out.**- If your illness involves diarrhea, vomiting, runny nose, sweating, or other bodily purging, this is your body pushing the germs out. Let it do it's thing. You'll need to keep hydrated, and in bad cases you'll need electrolytes. Gatorade and clear sodas (Sprite, 7-up) are recommended by many doctors. Drink a lot. If you're vomiting you'll need your nutrients. Your blood sugar can drop quickly, but the aforementioned drinks will help there. Stick to clear liquids and broths for a day or two, then move to toast, rice, and bananas and work your way up.

- **Don't get sick in the first place.**- Keep a balanced diet, sleep, and keep as little stress as possible. If your immune system is strong, you won't need the rest of the advice. Eat lots of garlic and onions. All of the alliums (onions, garlic, chives. . .) are loaded with goodies that boost your defenses.

Influenza

First, there should be a note on Swine Flu. Unless the patient is elderly or very young, there isn't much more danger than there is in a normal flu. That said, normal influenza kills many people every year. We don't want you dead.

There is no such thing as a 24-hour flu. These are usually mild cases of food poisoning, and just need to be purged. Let yourself vomit. Go to bed.

If someone you're close to gets the flu, you already have it. You are contagious for at least a day (or five, depending on who you ask) before symptoms appear. Get your supplies now and get ready.

If you have been exposed, get supplies as soon as you start feeling off. Even a sore throat is a warning sign. Drink about a gallon of orange juice in the first 24 hours if you can, and go straight to bed. Don't get up if you can help it. These days, few employers or teachers will grudge you a few sick days for the flu. Eat lots of fresh garlic and onion in your food. This is a good excuse for Italian food, as if we need it. After a day or so of sinus trouble, this may be all you can taste.

If you get a fever, try to break a sweat. Use an electric blanket, or drink something hot and wrap up in a comforter. This is the fever breaking, and sweating the viruses away. As soon as it breaks, take as hot a shower as you can stand to wash it all away. Try for clean bedding if you can after that. You'll probably have to do this a few times. IF your fever gets higher than 102 degrees, 100 for a child, or you start uncontrollably shaking, get to the doctor or emergency room NOW. After a fever gets too high it can febrile seizures. Brain damage and death are close behind.

After the flu has run its course, many people notice a vile odor in their space. Healthy people can recognize the odor on the infected. We don't know what it is, but we recognize it. We recommend getting it out as soon as you have the strength. You'll have to wash all of the fabrics used while ill, including clothing and linens. Air out your living space for a few minutes. Take out your garbage.

Other Illnesses

There are a variety of other bugs that are a bit more serious than the common cold or flu that need to be discussed in brief. Many of these have symptoms that resemble the flu at first, but can be a bit more serious.

Chicken Pox/Varicella

Good thing is if you catch this in childhood, you are immune to it for the rest of your life. Bad thing is, if you get this as an adult, it is a major pain in the ass. Varicella is highly contagious and is accompanied by fever, weakness, and nausea. Characteristic "pox" or blisters form over many parts of the body. The infectious period lasts until all the blisters have dried out and scabbed over, so if you have not had this illness, you may want to avoid being around folks who have it until it happens. Health clinics do sell a vaccine to prevent this. However, the vaccine is expensive. It requires a series of two to three shots at a cost of 90 USD to 120 USD apiece and is usually only purchased by medical staff.

Pneumonia

This is when the insides of the lungs become swollen from a virus or bacteria spreading there. It can also be caused by an injury to the lung, some parasites, and exposure to some molds or chemicals. A bad cough, fever, difficulty breathing, and chest pains are all symptoms. Depending on how bad the condition is, you may need antibiotics.

Tuberculosis or TB

TB has gotten a lot of press as of late. Basically, it is a strain of bacteria that gets in the lungs (or sometimes other areas) of the body and spreads through coughing, sneezing, and mucous from it's host. Left untreated, this can kill up to half of the folks that get this. It is also the reason that the back of OTC cough syrups always state if you have blood in the stuff you cough up or have a cough lasting more than week to see a doctor. Classic symptoms are night sweats, really bad cough, high fever, blood in spit, and weight loss. But, sometime folks can be merely carriers and have TB with no symptoms. Most clinics do offer a simple test for TB called the TB skin test. It costs 20 USD to 40 USD. They inject a substance right below the skin and ask you to come back a day or so later. If the spot they injected you becomes red and swollen, they then give you a chest X-ray to rule out or confirm TB. TB can be very hard to get rid of once you get it.

Parasites

Lice

When living in communal situations it takes only one person to bring lice to everyone. This rule especially applies to kids. You are less likely to get infested if you don't share combs or hats but most of all a buzz haircut gives the little guys no place to hide or attach eggs. You can use several different essential oils such as rosemary or eucalyptus to drive/kill the bugs off or use a shampoo from a pharmacy which is almost as effective but cheaper. kerosene was an old school treatment to kill lice and eggs but the danger of a horrible death in flames should there be a spark makes this method unreasonable to the point of insanity. Vinegar dissolves the glue lice use to secure their eggs but often takes several treatments and then washing with soap or shampoo. A few drops of olive oil combed into long hair prevents the lice from gluing their eggs down. The best all around method is to purchase a lice comb before you start out, they are tiny and if used daily will remove any lice as they hatch and keep them out if you get colonized, lice combs are cheap and available at any pharmacy worldwide.

Giardia

Giarditis is a waterborne illness sometimes found in the wilderness from animals defecating in the water but more commonly in urban areas and places with dysfunctional water and sewer treatment systems. Giardia can be killed with a medication called Metronidazole or Flagyl but you can avoid the cramping and diarrhea by filtering or boiling water from a questionable source. Bottled water is also a good way to avoid this and other waterborne illness but be sure to break the seal yourself some restaurants will refill water bottles from the polluted tap and resell.



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