

We've all had one and some of us even get shots to avoid them. I am talking about the common cold and the flu. It is that time again and from now until May you are the most susceptible to these nasty viruses. We usually experience a couple of bouts here in our office before the season is over.

If you want to avoid getting sick with the common cold, there are some very simple rules to abide by. The first and maybe most important is to frequently wash your hands. Using an antibacterial soap or alcohol based sanitizer lessens your risk of catching or transferring the cold virus. While it is not always possible the next best way to avoid a cold is to simply stay away from sickies. You know that person that just has to come in to work sick because they "can't" stay home, well it's best to stay at least 10-15 feet away from them. If that is not possible then try not to touch anything they have touched without wiping it down with a sanitizing wipe. During bouts here we all are proactive about wiping down phones, headsets, keyboards, mice, bathroom doors, etc. Basically anything you could think of. You should do the same.

Now while wiping all the above items down will help prevent you from catching a cold, it may not help in protecting against the flu. The best defense against that is the Flu Vaccine. According to the CDC about 200,000 people are hospitalized each year with flu symptoms and a portion of them pass away. With the flu season upon us it is recommended that you get the shot soon because it does take anywhere from 2-4 weeks to take effect. While the vaccine is not 100% effective, any symptoms of the flu that you get will likely be less severe.

Did you know that there are differences between how you catch a cold or the flu? You can get the flu from infected people who sneeze, cough or even just talk within 6-10 ft. away. Touch is the most common way of catching a cold, which is why it is important to wipe down common surfaces.

Getting enough rest is also key in whether you get sick or not. According to a study from Carnegie Mellon University those subjects that had less than 7 hours per night were more likely to get sick than those who had at least 8 hours of dream time. There is no distinction as to when you should get sleep, so I say take a nap as often as you can, just don't let your boss catch you doing it of course

I hope this has helped you become more aware of those around you and how you can avoid being the next victim of the cold or flu.