

Keeping your immune system healthy is a way to keep the flu bug away

January 16 2020, by Matthew Oates



Getting proper sleep, nutrition and exercise can help your immune system battle influenza and other bugs during the winter. Credit: Dan Page

Getting a good night's sleep and maintaining a healthy lifestyle are two ways to battle the flu bug, as its presence increases across the nation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reporting [high activity of influenza and influenza-like illnesses](#) across the country. In its latest report, the CDC estimates that during this season in the United

States, 9.7 million cases of flu have been diagnosed, 32 children and 4,800 adults have died due to influenza.

Having a healthy [immune system](#) could help you fight off the flu virus and other bugs if you are exposed, said Libby Richards, an associate professor of nursing who specializes in public health in Purdue University's School of Nursing.

"There are many things about immunity that are beyond our control but there are some things we can do to help maintain a strong immune system so we can take care of ourselves," Richards said.

Some tips to keep your immune system strong include getting a proper amount of sleep each night, maintaining a healthy weight, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, drinking plenty of fluids, meeting physical activity guidelines, not smoking, limiting alcohol consumption and limiting stress.

"Seven to nine hours of sleep is recommended when you are feeling sick, as well as when you are healthy," Richards said. "In addition to getting adequate sleep when ill, it is also important to rest during the day and try to avoid overexertion."

"If you like to exercise at the gym, be safe and responsible during this cold and flu season. If you have a productive cough, do everyone a favor and avoid the gym. Staying home is a perfect way to not spread germs," Richards said. "If you have mild cold symptoms and you feel you have the energy to exercise, go for it as exercise might help you feel better, but consider reducing the duration or intensity of your exercise. If you are having fatigue, body aches, stomach issues, you should stay home and rest as [exercise](#) could increase your chance of an injury."

It can be challenging to keep germs contained in one's house if there are

children.

"Kids touch everything, which is one big way germs are spread. Kids also tend not to understand or value what '[personal space](#)' is and can be in each other's faces all the time," Richards said. "Parents, teachers and caregivers can demonstrate proper handwashing and cough hygiene all year long—not just during flu season."

Richards encourages using sanitizing wipes often to clean things that kids commonly touch, such as remote controls, phones, tablets, toys, doorknobs and faucets.

"As much as we love to show affection with kisses, it's possible to spread the flu one to three days prior to the start of symptoms," Richards said.

Provided by Purdue University

Citation: Keeping your immune system healthy is a way to keep the flu bug away (2020, January 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-01-immune-healthy-flu-bug.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--