

5 Smart Habits to Stay Well during Flu Season

Despite what you may see advertised, there are no miracle foods or vitamins that can help prevent or cure the H1N1 or any other flu. There are, however, plenty of smart things you can do to keep your family as healthy as possible this season.

1. Keep your hands clean.

One of the best ways to stay healthy is to wash your hands properly and frequently. Washing your hands well will help protect you from all germs, including seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus. Use soap and warm water - and wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand wipes or gel sanitizers.

2. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Produce is packed with the nutrients that your immune system needs to fight viruses and bacteria of all types. Go for all types of brightly colored fruits and veggies. They will have more of the disease-fighting antioxidants, like vitamin C and beta-carotene. Fresh, frozen, dried, canned in juice, and 100% juice can all offer health benefits.

3. Drink plenty of fluids.

Water is always a refreshing choice. Tea, especially antioxidant-rich green tea, can be a nice way to warm up and stay hydrated anytime. 100% orange or other juice is also good, but don't overdo it: A small glass a day is plenty. Drinking enough fluids (6 to 8 cups a day) will help keep your mucous membranes moist and able to fight off germs.

4. Choose nutrient-rich snacks.

During flu season, your body needs every drop of nutrition it can get, so don't waste your calories on 'empty' snacks. Skip the chips, cookies, and colas. Feed your body well with a variety of tasty nutrient-rich items. In addition to fruits and veggies, go for sunflower seeds, nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashews, etc.), low-fat yogurt, and beef jerky.

5. Consider a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement.

This is the right time of year for a little extra nutrition insurance, a basic vitamin/mineral pill with 100% of the Daily Value (DV) for most nutrients. Although super-expensive supplements with mega-doses are mostly a waste of your money, you may want to look for a supplement with 1000 IUs of vitamin D. While the DV is still 400 IUs, many experts are recommending an increase for optimal health and well-being.