



# Stay Well

## CHALLENGE

Practice healthy habits to avoid getting sick

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Stay Well."
2. Take action to stay well on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



You wake up in the morning with a stuffy nose and a sore throat. You're sneezing, coughing, and feel terrible.

And you're worried about missing work, getting your kids to school, and all the other day-to-day stuff you have to do.

Wondering where you caught the common cold?

A sick co-worker coughs during a meeting. You go to the store and forget to clean the shopping cart handle. Your kids haven't quite learned the art of using an elbow to cover a cough or wash their hands properly. You regularly visit places where people are everywhere like the airport or shopping mall.

Sound familiar?

It only takes one microscopic cold germ to make you sick. Breathe it in. Or transfer cold germs on your hands by rubbing your eye or touching your mouth. And you might get sick.



If you start to notice symptoms, what should you do? And if you want to prevent a cold, what are the best ways to stay healthy? That's what you'll learn in this month's *Health Challenge: Stay Well*.

How much do you know about the common cold?

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1.   There are more than 200 known viruses that can cause a cold.
2.   Cold germs can survive on some surfaces (like doorknobs, keyboards, and shopping carts) for up to 48 hours.
3.   The best ways to prevent a cold include: Wash your hands. Keep surfaces clean. Drink plenty of fluids. Get enough rest. Be active. Eat healthy foods.
4.   When someone with a cold coughs or sneezes, their germs can travel up to six feet.
5.   Your desk at the office may contain 100 times more germs and bacteria than a toilet seat.



How did you do? Healthy lifestyle habits can help prevent a cold. If you do get sick, drinking plenty of fluids and taking a few days off to rest will help. But prevention is best. It's one reason you should disinfect your desk. A University of Arizona study found the typical office desk contains 400 times more germs and bacteria than a toilet seat.<sup>5</sup>

Answers: 1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. True. 5. False.

## How Germs Are Spread

If you want to stay well, it's helpful to know how germs are spread:

- You pick it up by breathing in cold germs from someone sneezing or coughing.
- You touch a surface (doorknob, computer, shopping cart, table, phone, etc.) with cold germs.
- The germs get transferred to your hands. And then you rub your eye, pick your nose, or touch your mouth.



You can catch a cold in other ways, too. If you eat germ-y food, or share things like a toothbrush or cup with someone who has a cold, you might get sick.

### Risk factors for catching a cold

Just because you come in contact with cold germs, doesn't mean you're going to get sick. Your body might be strong enough to fight off a cold. But some choices can weaken your immune system, put you at risk for getting sick, or make you feel worse when you do catch a cold, like:

- ✓ Lack of sleep
- ✓ Too much stress
- ✓ Dehydration
- ✓ Too much alcohol
- ✓ Smoking
- ✓ Lack of physical activity
- ✓ Poor food choices



## 8 Ways to Avoid a Cold

Preventing a cold is always best. Here are some ways to avoid a cold, stay well, and get better sooner if you do get sick:

### 1. Wash your hands well and often.

Lather up with soap. Scrub for at least 20 seconds. Use hot water to rinse. If soap isn't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Soap and water is better.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Rest.

Your immune system can't fight the flu if you're fatigued. You're less likely to get sick if you sleep 7 to 8 hours a night.<sup>3</sup> And if you do catch a cold, get your Zzzs to get better.

### 3. Stay hydrated.

Drinking water helps improve circulation, keep cold germs out, and fight infection. When you're hydrated, it's easier for your body to fight off a cold. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day whether you have a cold or not.<sup>4</sup>

**4. Sanitize surfaces.** Use disinfectant spray or wipes to keep surfaces clean that your hands might touch. Don't forget phones, stair rails, and desks.

### 5. Avoid close contact with anyone with a cold.

Avoid being around others who are sick at home or at the office. Instead of shaking hands, be polite and skip the formality. Or go with a fist-bump or elbow-tap, to avoid cold germs. And if you're the one sick... stay home!

### 6. Manage stress in healthy ways.

Enjoy time with friends. Laugh. Listen to music. Take time to relax. Too much stress can put you at risk for getting sick, and take longer to get well if you do catch a cold.<sup>6</sup>

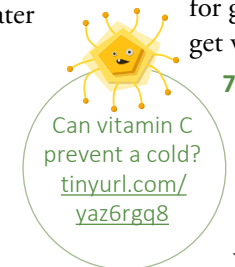
**7. Eat well.** Eat more brightly colored fruits, vegetables, and nuts (like strawberries, spinach, and walnuts). These foods are packed with vitamins and nutrients. They

also help combat inflammation to help your body deal with a cold.<sup>7</sup>

**8. Be physically active.** Regular exercise helps lower your risk of catching a cold by nearly 50 percent.<sup>8</sup> It can help you get better sooner if you do get sick, too. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity a day.



Common colds: Protect yourself and others  
[tinyurl.com/y9lnbb7t](http://tinyurl.com/y9lnbb7t)



Can vitamin C prevent a cold?  
[tinyurl.com/yaz6rgq8](http://tinyurl.com/yaz6rgq8)



Video: How to wash your hands  
<http://tinyurl.com/yb3eezix>

## Costs of the Common Cold in the U.S.



Catch a cold, and you might miss a day of work or need to see your doctor.

That's inconvenient. But the cost of the common cold is a lot higher than that.

**2 to 5** average number of times a person has a cold per year



75% of all households catch a cold

**200** known cold viruses can make you sick



70 MILLION

work days missed per year due to illness

**100 MILLION** doctor's visits per year for the common cold

**500 MILLION** estimated number of colds per year in the U.S.



**\$1.1 BILLION** spent on antibiotics (even though they have **no effect** on a cold virus)

**\$2.9 BILLION** spent on over-the-counter cold medicine per year

**\$40 BILLION** spent per year on

- missed work days,
- over-the-counter remedies,
- & medical care for the common cold



### References (accessed on Oct. 6, 2017)

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7. Harvard Health Publishing. (2017). Foods that fight inflammation. *Harvard Women's Health Watch*. <http://tinyurl.com/y759nrnh>
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Source: Archives of Internal Medicine<sup>1</sup>



# Stay Well

## CHALLENGE

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### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you take action to stay well.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to make staying well become a regular part of your life.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you took action to stay well. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I took action to stay well

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_