

# 5 healthy habits to get you through cold and flu season

We are smack dab in the middle of cold and flu season, but there are some proven ways to help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses.

Influenza viruses — also known as the flu — are spread from person to person, through coughing or sneezing by infected people. The symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Most people infected with influenza will have a mild illness that lasts three to five days.

According to [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but the CDC also recommends taking the following precautions:

## **Avoid close contact.**

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

## **Stay home when you are sick.**

Stay home from work and school and try to avoid errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading the illness to others.

“Students and staff with influenza symptoms including a fever, a cough or sore throat should stay home and not attend classes or participate in other group activities for at least 24 hours after the fever resolves without the use of fever-reducing medications,” says Pamela Kahn, OCDE’s coordinator of Health and Wellness.

## **Cover your mouth and nose.**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Flu and other serious respiratory illnesses, like respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), are spread by cough, sneezing or unclean hands.

## **Clean your hands.**

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

## **Practice other good health habits.**

Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

Meanwhile, you may have heard news reports about [a new coronavirus that has caused an outbreak](#) of respiratory illness.

The first known cases of 2019-nCoV — short for “2019 novel coronavirus” — were reported in December in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as [MERS](#). A novel coronavirus — often shown as “nCoV” — is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

The Orange County Health Care Agency says the risk for schoolchildren in Orange County is minimal. To date, no cases have been identified in the county, and internationally the illness has primarily affected adults.

For more information, visit the Orange County Health Care Agency’s website at:  
[www.ocalthinfo.com/phs/about/epidasmt/epi/dip/prevention/novel\\_coronavirus](http://www.ocalthinfo.com/phs/about/epidasmt/epi/dip/prevention/novel_coronavirus)