



## > Cold & flu

December

### Don't give the gift no one wants

'Tis the season for family, friends and good times. The last thing anyone wants is to catch a cold, the flu or a nasty stomach humbug. For a healthier holiday, follow these steps to stay flu-free:

- > Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- > If you're sick, stay home from work or school.
- > Keep your distance from others who are sick.
- > Don't touch your face.
- > Get your flu shot, as long as your doctor says it's OK.
- > Don't share food, drinks, toothpaste or lip balm.
- > Clean doorknobs with a disinfectant.
- > Get plenty of sleep.
- > Drink lots of water.
- > Open windows in your house to let fresh air in and stale air out.
- > Step away from the mistletoe. Avoid kissing on the lips if you feel a cold coming on.

### Rev up or relax? It's your call.

Get moving! Or chill out. A study by the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that people who exercise or meditate have less severe symptoms when they're sick with a cold or the flu. They also miss fewer work days as a result.

The study tracked 150 people age 50 and older. Those who meditated or exercised moderately (biking or running) had about half as many episodes of cold or flu symptoms, compared with those who did nothing at all.

They also saved more sick days. Folks who meditated used only 16 sick days and those who exercised used 32 sick days. The group that did neither activity used a whopping 67 total sick days.

Source: *Annals of Family Medicine*

### Home remedies for the common cold

When a nasty cold sets in, all you can think about is getting rid of it. Over-the-counter medicines can give you some relief. But you can also try home remedies to ward off symptoms. Minimize your misery with these tips:

- > Blow your nose often to clear mucus. (Wash your hands afterward.)
- > Get plenty of rest so your body can focus on fighting the virus.
- > Drink hot liquids to relieve nasal congestion (blockage) and stay hydrated.
- > Sleep upright with an extra pillow to help drain your nasal passages.
- > Gargle a teaspoon of warm salt water four times a day to relieve a sore throat.

Source: *WebMD*

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