

BOOST *Your* **IMMUNE** **SYSTEM**

Using God's Natural Remedies

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Limit Your Exposure to Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases are the most common cause of illness that most of us face regularly. They are caused by germs—organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites. These organisms get into the body, multiply, and cause illness. Examples include colds, influenza, pneumonia, coronavirus, chickenpox, measles, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), hepatitis, Lyme disease, and the list goes on.

In past years, infectious diseases were more common. In 1900, the top three causes of death in the United States were pneumonia and influenza, tuberculosis, and gastrointestinal infections. Diphtheria was the tenth leading cause of death. Fortunately, most of those diseases have been largely eliminated by vaccinations, sanitation, and other public health measures.

Many of these infectious agents are still around, however, and from time to time, new ones pop up and cause serious illness and death. For example, in the first eight months after COVID-19 came on the scene, more than 200,000 people died from this new virus. Each year the flu also comes around during flu season. It caused 12,000 to 61,000 deaths annually from 2010 to 2020.¹ Who knows what new disease may pop up next year?

Taking proactive steps to prevent these common causes of illness is important.

- Limit your exposure to these illnesses. Avoid people who are sick and contagious. From past experience, we've learned to wash our hands, sanitize surfaces, wear face masks, stay at a distance from people who may be ill, and stay home if sick to avoid spreading germs.
- Be sure you and your family members are vaccinated for

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common illnesses as your doctor prescribes. Vaccines have virtually wiped out major killers such as smallpox and polio. Vaccines are still very important for childhood diseases, pneumonia, influenza, coronavirus, human papillomavirus (HPV), and other dangerous infectious agents, depending upon where you live.

- Practice good sanitation and cleanliness in your home and community.
- Limit contact with mosquitoes and ticks in areas where malaria, Lyme disease, and other diseases are passed from insect bites—stay out of the woods in tick-infested areas or wear insect repellent, use mosquito netting at night in countries where malaria is present, and take other recommended measures.
- Be sure your water supply is pure. If it's not, boil or purify it. The same applies to foods. In areas where intestinal infections are common, be sure food is thoroughly cooked, served on clean plates, and prepared by well-washed hands. Being proactive prevents most problems.

At one time, I worked for a month in Central America, where the World Health Organization (WHO) was working to lower infant mortality rates. In the village I was in, four out of every ten children died before reaching the age of five, primarily from intestinal infections. Sanitation was the key need in those homes. Washing one's hands helped the most.

MINIMIZING RISK

The first line of defense against illness is to limit one's exposure to germs. So what is the best way to do this? The following recommendations for minimizing the risk of getting or spreading infectious diseases were gleaned from the US government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov>:

Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least twenty

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seconds. It is especially important to wash before eating or preparing food, before touching your face, after using the restroom, after leaving a public place, after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, after handling your face mask, after changing a diaper, after caring for someone who is sick, and after touching animals or pets.

- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least *60 percent alcohol*. Cover all surfaces of your hands, and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact with people who may be sick

- Inside your home, avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If living with someone who has an infectious disease, wear a special mask (such as a plastic surgical mask) and gloves when caring for him or her. These masks are designed to filter out viruses when working in close contact with patients. Wash your hands thoroughly after contact.
- If you are sick, stay home

Cover coughs and sneezes

- Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze, and do not spit.
- Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Clean and disinfect

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks,

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phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks. Some viruses can live on hard surfaces for up to four days.

- If surfaces are dirty, clean them. Use detergent or soap and water before disinfection. Then, use a household disinfectant. Most common Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)–registered household disinfectants will work.

Monitor your health

- Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, diarrhea, sore throat, or other symptoms of an infection.
- If symptoms develop, take your temperature; rest; eat light, healthy meals, and drink plenty of fluids; but if symptoms get significantly worse or if you are concerned, contact a doctor or a medical professional and follow his or her directions. If the symptoms listed above become severe, call 911 and get emergency help right away.

Doctors can test to see whether you have the flu or other infectious diseases. Most counties and states also have free testing available for anyone with symptoms of some infectious diseases. Check the internet for free testing and testing sites in your county.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has an interactive screening tool for persons who think they may have COVID-19. You can find it on the web at <https://covid19.apple.com/screening>. If you have COVID-19, follow your doctor’s instructions. You may also want to read the CDC guidelines “What to Do If You Are Sick,” which can be found on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>.

1. “Influenza (Flu): Figure 1: Estimated Range of Annual Burden of Flu in the U.S. From 2010–2020,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last reviewed October 5, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/index.html>.