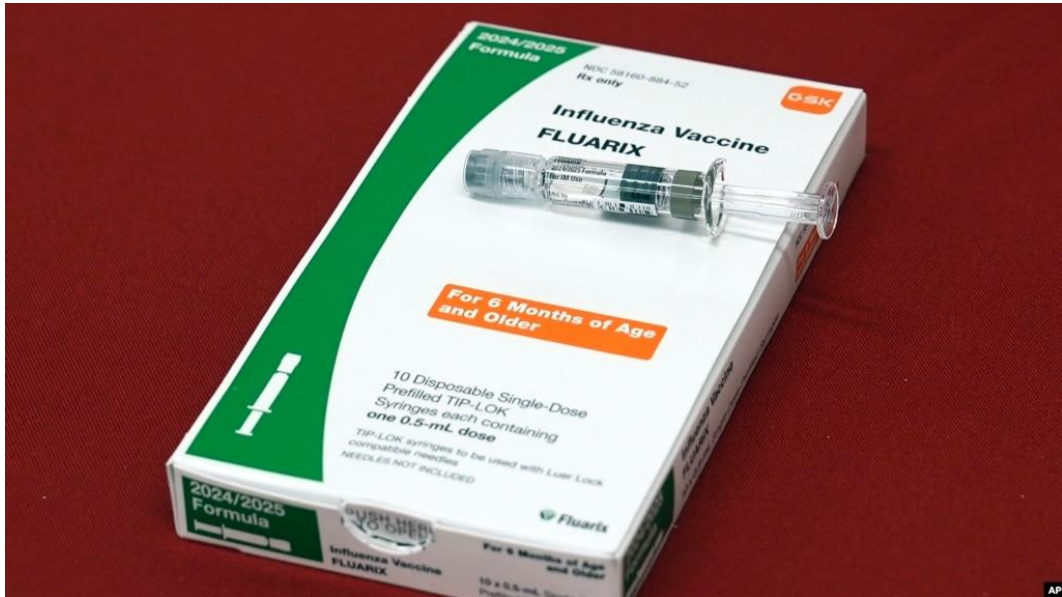


How to Protect Against Increased Viral Spread in Winter

インフルエンザやコロナ、ノロウイルス、風邪など、冬にはさまざまな感染症が身近になります。症状が似ていても、原因となるウイルスや広がり方には違いがあり、それに応じた対策を考えることも重要です。毎日の生活の中で少し意識を変えることが、自分だけでなく周りの人を守ることに繋がります。あなたは冬の感染対策で何を大切にしていますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Influenza, or the flu, COVID-19, norovirus and the common cold easily spread throughout the winter season. Knowing what these infections are and how they spread can help us avoid them. The Associated Press has listed some things anyone can do to keep healthy and to know more about these infections:

Cold, flu, or COVID?

Some signs, or symptoms, of a cold, the flu, COVID-19 or norovirus are similar. This can make it hard to know what is making us sick. However, some symptoms are unmistakable.

Norovirus spreads through polluted food, water and surfaces, including the skin. The virus causes vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain. The sickness can last for about one to three days.

The common cold can be caused by several different kinds of viruses and can include several symptoms. These include a runny nose, congestion, cough, sneezing, and pain in the throat, head and other parts of the body. It can also cause higher than normal body temperature, or a fever. The common cold usually lasts less than a week.

The flu is caused by influenza viruses that are always changing. Infection leads to fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headaches and feeling tired. Flu symptoms usually hit more quickly than cold symptoms. They can last from a few days to two weeks.

COVID-19 can cause fever, chills, cough, congestion, tiredness and throat and head pain. Other signs of COVID are the loss of smell or taste, difficulty breathing, nausea, or vomiting. The sickness can last for several days.

The respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, can make people sick for one or two weeks. The signs include runny nose, congestion, coughing, sneezing, breathing problems, fever, and a loss of appetite.

Wash your hands

So how can we avoid infections? Experts say people should wash their hands carefully and often with a cleanser such as soap. Clean hands are very important to reducing the spread of norovirus, colds, flu and COVID-19. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says this is especially true after using the bathroom, eating or preparing food.

Make sure you take enough time to wash your hands. It should take at least 20 seconds to complete the job. If you do not have soap and water available, cleansers called hand sanitizers are a good substitute. The sanitizer must be at least 60 percent alcohol to be effective against most of these viruses. An exception is norovirus which requires a stronger sanitizer.

Cleaning surfaces can remove viruses

To avoid norovirus, you must immediately clean surfaces that have come in contact with infected food or bodily fluids. The CDC advises disinfecting things with a chlorine bleach solution or one of the products listed on the Environmental Protection Agency website. Do not forget to wash any clothing that has come in contact with vomit or other bodily waste. Use hot water and soap. Then, wash your hands again.

With colds and flu, it is best to repeatedly clean surfaces that are touched or used often. These include doorknobs, light switches, kitchen workspaces, children's playthings, cellphones and other objects around the home. Use household cleaning products that contain soap or detergent and follow up with a sanitizer. The CDC has more advice on how to clean.

COVID-19 spreads through the air in small drops and particles. The CDC says there is low risk of getting the virus from surfaces.

Keeping your hands off your face can keep viruses out

Viruses can spread through talking, coughing and sneezing, so cover your mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough. Then, wash your hands.

Do not touch your face. If you have viruses on your unwashed hands and touch your face, eyes or nose, they can get into your body. Your likelihood of getting sick will increase.

Consider a vaccine (if there is one)

You might consider a vaccine if one is available. Updated COVID-19 vaccines are available. Yearly flu shots for people 6 months and older are also available. For adults 60 and older or people who are pregnant, you might want to get the RSV vaccine. There is no vaccine for norovirus or the common cold.

Another way to keep your defenses against viruses up: Rest

Your immune system may not work as well if you are lacking enough sleep, water or are experiencing high levels of tension. Rest. Sleep. And drink enough water.

Stay at home

If you do get sick, you can take a test to find out if you have COVID-19 or influenza. It is important to know if you have a virus that could be treated with available medicines. The drug Paxlovid treats COVID-19. Tamiflu is used to treat flu. Above all, if you have symptoms of any of these sicknesses, stay at home and away from other people. This will help stop the spread of viruses.

To treat a cold, flu or COVID-19, rest and drink fluids. You can take pain medicine to lower a fever or to ease pain. Humidifier machines, which increase the amount of water in the air, can also help ease symptoms.

There is no medication for norovirus. You need to replace fluids lost because of the sickness. Drink as much water and other liquids as possible. Seek medical help if you notice you have a dry mouth and throat, are not expelling liquid waste easily, or feel dizzy when standing.

The Associated Press produced this report. Caty Weaver adapted it for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. avoid (v.) To stay away from something or prevent it from happening

Mayuko avoids driving at night.

2. surface (n.) The outside or top layer of something

The surface of the Moon is covered by a thick layer of fine dust.

3. cause (v.) To make something happen

Poor planning can cause serious problems for a business.

4. available (adj.) Ready to be used or obtained

There are still a few seats available for the classical concert at noon.

5. symptom (n.) A sign that show a person may have an illness

The patient still reported several symptoms after taking the medicine.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Explain how these three viruses spread: norovirus, COVID, the flu.
2. What things can you do to prevent from getting sick from a virus?
3. Why does the article recommend staying at home if you get the flu?
4. Which methods do you use to reduce your risk of getting sick in winter?
5. If you want to avoid *spreading* a virus, which mask would you wear, a mask for allergies and dust, or an N95 mask? If you want to avoid *getting* a virus, which mask would you wear? Why?