

How to keep flu from thriving in your home

It's prime flu season, and each year we hear the same advice: get your flu shot, wash your hands frequently and cover your mouth when you sneeze. Flu particles can linger in the air and on the surfaces we touch day in and day out, from computer keyboards and TV remotes to the kitchen sink or refrigerator door handle. With flu on everyone's mind this year, there has also been increased interest in the science behind how the flu virus lives, and history may hold the answers.

Grandma may have been ahead of her time when keeping a tea kettle warming on the stove in winter to moisten the air. A new, comprehensive scientific research paper has given new insight into the lifespan of the flu virus and how humidity plays a significant role in the survival of the virus on surfaces and in the air. Taking into account the findings from a number of published, peer reviewed studies from over the last 70 years, an independent team of scientists and researchers hailing from such institutions as the Harvard School of Public Health, have found that in more humid environments, the flu virus survival time is markedly decreased.

Specifically, the research showed that homes kept at 40 to 60 percent humidity are likely to have fewer flu viruses lurking in the air and on often-touched surfaces like sink faucets, door handles and countertops. While the typical flu virus can survive on surfaces and in the air for up to 24 hours, the survival time in a more humid environment is significantly lower.

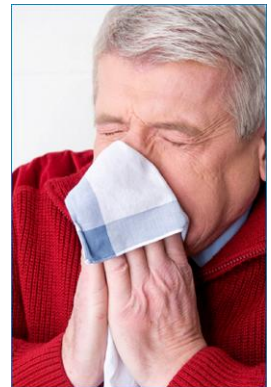
"The flu virus is all around us this time of year - at the office, in schools, on public transportation, etc. If the flu virus is in your home due to a sick family member or visitor, you want to do everything you can to shorten its life span," says Dr. Ted Myatt, senior scientist at Environmental Health and Engineering, Inc. and co-author of the new report. "We've always known that humidifiers are a great way to soothe cold and cough symptoms, but using a humidifier can also help to maintain proper humidity levels in your home."

"The research suggests that a proper level of relative humidity in your home can really make a difference in the survival of the flu virus," adds Jim McDevitt, instructor at the Harvard School of Public Health and a certified industrial hygienist at the American Board of Industrial Hygiene. "If you can maintain those levels, the number of flu virus particles in the air and on surfaces are likely to decrease."

Because flu season strikes at what is, for many areas of the country, the driest time of the year, you can combine your efforts to combat the flu with the recommended steps to make your home environment more comfortable. It's not uncommon for winter humidity levels to dip as low as 20 percent, which can lead to dry skin, chapped lips, parched throats and other discomforts.

The most essential tool for increasing relative humidity levels is a good humidifier. If you think your humidity levels might not be up to par - or if you want to better maintain them - a hygrometer is a handy device available at most drug stores. Hygrometers provide a digital readout of the relative humidity in your home, and are compact and low-cost. If you use your hygrometer and humidifier together to keep humidity at the ideal 40 to 60 percent level, the research indicates the flu will have less of a chance of surviving in your home.

Courtesy of ARA Content



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Spring is around the corner, so keep healthy the remainder of winter

In many areas of the country, the snow and wintry conditions will stay afloat even into spring. To ward off those winter to springtime change-of-season sniffles, think back to what your mom told you - eat right, go to bed early and to stop touching everything.

Dr. Carl Wurster, chair of the Allied Health Department at Brown Mackie College - Boise, provides 5 tips on ways you can stay healthy the remainder of the winter.

1. Regular exercise increases blood circulation and you also tend to drink more water when you exercise, which increases adrenalin secretion.
2. "If you're not in good shape, adjusting your diet is the best thing you can do," says Dr. Wurster. "Proteins contain immune globulins which the body uses to fight viral and bacterial infections. Proteins also contain chemicals that make up antibodies."
3. Drink more water to prevent hypothermia. Without enough water, the mucus in your throat gets thicker and sets you up for pneumonia.
4. Increased sleep causes a big change in cortisone secretion from your adrenal gland - which has a positive effect on the immune response.
5. By taking vitamin C and other supplements you lower your chances of picking up an upper respiratory infection.

Courtesy of ARA Content

Help available for people living with diabetes

It's a long drive out to the rural diabetes clinic where she makes her educational presentations, but Janie Burmester knows that the work she's doing can have a huge impact on people's lives.

Burmester is one of about 15,000 Certified Diabetes Educators (CDEs) in the United States. CDEs are health professionals, certified by the National Certification Board of Diabetes Educators, who teach self-management techniques to patients diagnosed with diabetes.

With nearly 24 million Americans currently living with diabetes, a special program called the CDE HELP Team is providing free counseling and support to people who need a helping hand with their diabetes. The CDE HELP Team was created by sanofi-aventis U.S., a world leader in diabetes care, to help people with diabetes who may be using the company's insulin products for the first time.

Since the program began, the CDE HELP Team has educated more than 100,000 patients with diabetes. Currently, 70 CDE HELP Team members are available in cities across the United States.

Additional information about the CDE HELP Team, including a search tool that helps identify local CDEs in your area, can be found at www.cdehelpteam.com.



Courtesy of ARA Content

Simple steps to help your heart stay healthy

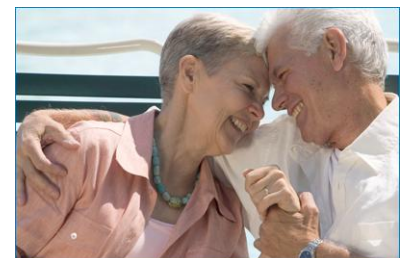
More than 80 percent of those polled by the Florida Department of Citrus in a new survey said they felt well-informed about ways to maintain heart health. Yet fewer than half choose heart healthy options when they eat out or shop for groceries, and only slightly more than a third (37 percent) stock their pantries with heart healthy foods, the survey revealed.

Those who failed to make healthy choices cited time pressures and perceived expenses as the most common reasons why they felt challenged to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Since many of the risk factors for heart disease may be impacted by diet, supporting heart health may be as simple as learning which foods are heart healthy and how to incorporate them into regular meals.

For example, the orange juice that starts many Americans' mornings provides nutrients such as potassium, which may help maintain healthy blood pressure and promote heart health. Orange juice can go beyond the breakfast table. One cup added to your favorite salad dressing, smoothie or marinade is an easy and delicious way to incorporate the beverage's nutrients into your meals.

To learn more about the heart health benefits of orange juice, go to www.FloridaJuice.com.



Courtesy of ARA Content

Simply sensational homemade soups

No matter what the season, people frequently turn to a comforting bowl of soup for lunch or dinner. What surprises many is how easy it can be to make sensational homemade soups. Whether serving soup as part of an entertaining menu or an easy weeknight meal, making soup from scratch does not have to require hours in the kitchen.

Shortcuts, like starting with ingredients such as 100% natural Swanson chicken broth, which provides an ideal blend of stock, vegetables, herbs and seasonings, make it easy to create the perfect foundation for every soup recipe.

Here are some quick tips to help you enjoy homemade soups throughout the year:

* Cook up a family favorite during the weekend and save leftovers for school and work lunches or for suppers throughout the week.

* Entertaining? Turn your party into a soup sampler. Ask each guest to bring their favorite soup and serve in cups, ramekins or even shot glasses to encourage people to try all the different varieties.

* Fire up the slow cooker. In the morning, place ingredients into your slow cooker. Let the soup simmer throughout the day and you'll come home to an inviting aroma and a dinner that's ready to enjoy. Add a crusty bread or salad to round out the meal.

Twice-Baked Potato Soup and Savory Vegetable Beef Soup are two soups that can be prepared in under an hour. Both are sure to please friends and family. For more flavorful soup recipes, visit www.SwansonBroth.com and www.CampbellsKitchen.com.

Twice-Baked Potato Soup (Prep: 10 minutes/Cook: 45 minutes/Makes: 8 servings)

6 large potatoes

2 tablespoons butter

1 small sweet onion, finely chopped (about 1/2 cup)

5 cups Swanson Chicken Broth (Regular, Natural Goodness or Certified Organic)

1/4 cup light cream

1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives

Toppers



1. Heat the oven to 425 F. Prick the potatoes with a fork. Bake for 30 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Remove the potatoes to a bowl and cover the bowl. Let the potatoes stand for 10 minutes. Remove the skin from the potatoes and mash the pulp.

2. Heat the butter in a 3-quart saucepan. Add the onion and cook until it's tender. Stir in the broth and 5 cups potato pulp.

3. Place 1/3 of the broth mixture into a blender or food processor. Cover and blend until smooth. Pour the mixture into a medium bowl. Repeat the blending process twice more with the remaining broth mixture. Return all of the pureed mixture to the saucepan. Stir in the cream and chives and cook for 5 minutes or until the mixture is hot. Season as desired.

4. Spoon 1/4 cup remaining potato pulp into each of 8 serving bowls. Divide the broth mixture among the bowls. Serve with one or more Assorted Toppers.

Assorted Toppers: Cooked crumbled bacon, shredded Cheddar cheese and/or sour cream.

Time-Saving Tip: Microwave the potatoes on HIGH for 10 to 12 minutes or until they're fork-tender.

Savory Vegetable Beef Soup (Prep: 10 minutes/Cook: 20 minutes/Makes: 6 servings)

1 3/4 cups Swanson Beef Broth (Regular, Lower Sodium or Certified Organic)

2 medium potatoes, cut into cubes

1 cup cubed cooked beef

3 cups V8 100% Vegetable Juice

1 can (about 8 ounces) whole peeled tomato, cut up

1 bag (16 ounces) frozen mixed vegetables

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme leaves, crushed

1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Place the broth and potatoes in a 4-quart saucepan and heat to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low. Cover and cook for 5 minutes or until the potatoes are tender.

2. Stir the beef, vegetable juice, tomatoes, vegetables, thyme and black pepper in the saucepan. Cover and cook for 15 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.



Local News

On Friday, March 26, 2010 we will be participating in the Hollywood (Florida) Senior and Law Enforcement Together (S.A.L.T.) Council Health Fair to be held at the Hollywood Beach Multipurpose Center, 1301 S. Ocean Drive, Hollywood, Florida from 10 AM to 1 PM. There will be free health screenings, refreshments, raffles, door prizes, entertainment and giveaways. In addition, there will be educational information provided by local police and fire departments. Please join us for a fun and informational event.

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