

How do I guard against **colds & flu?**



By far the most effective way to prevent flu is to have the annual flu vaccine which is covered under the Medshield Wellness benefit. However, there are some general measures that can be taken. Colds and flu are spread by viruses which can easily spread from surface to person and person to person. For this reason it's a good idea to carry an alcohol-based cleanser with you to sterilise any surfaces you believe to be putting your health at risk.

Many cold and flu viruses are acquired from people who don't yet show any symptoms, and it's always difficult to contain viruses that travel through the air. You can't really help being exposed to these viruses.

However, there are some general measures you can take to give yourself the best chance of avoiding infection:

- Wash your hands frequently and don't touch your nose, eyes or mouth unnecessarily.
- "Contain" sneezes and coughs with disposable tissues (and make

sure to throw them away immediately after use) and wash your hands afterwards.

- Try not to touch objects around you when in public places, such as the rail of the escalator or your coughing colleague's pen or computer mouse.
- With an incubation period of one to four days and a contagious period of seven days or longer, it's best to avoid any person with flu for at least a week.
- Quit smoking. Those who smoke are more vulnerable to respiratory infections and complications.
- Clean surfaces, especially kitchen and bathroom counter tops, with disinfectant soap.
- Discourage your child from sharing food, utensils, handkerchiefs, napkins and towels with classmates.
- Teach your children to wash their hands before and after eating, after using the bathroom, after touching their faces, after spending time in public spaces, and after touching animals.
- Rather keep your toddler at home if a child at the crèche has the flu and yours is healthy. Similarly, keep a child at home who shows symptoms of flu to avoid infecting other children. ■