

It's Cold and Flu Season – How are you protecting yourself?

The start of each year is often met with the peak of cold and flu season. This year is no different except that we are facing the new strain of coronavirus, COVID-19, and the widespread media attention this public health outbreak is causing. It is understandable that many are feeling overwhelmed by the thought of catching coronavirus and are concerned about how to best care for ourselves and our loved ones during this challenging time. Take comfort in knowing there are simple things you can do each and every day to help ensure your health is protected.

- **Scrub a dub!** Wash your hands! As simple as this sounds, it truly is the most effective way to stop the spread of germs. Be sure to use soap, and to make sure you are being thorough enough, sing the “Happy Birthday” song which is just the right length to ensure a thorough cleaning of your hands. Wash all parts of your hands, including the “webs” between your fingers and thumbs.
- **When without, use a squeeze!** If you are unable to get to a sink for soap and water to thoroughly wash your hands, use hand sanitizer. While handwashing is best, hand sanitizer helps to reduce the spread of germs when you are out and about. Have hand sanitizer in several locations so you can always have some on hand – think about placing some bottles in your car, your purse, your suitcase, the diaper bag, or even in your coat pocket.
- **Don't rub, don't touch!** As tempting as it is to rub those scratchy eyes during allergy season or to rub a runny nose, don't. In fact, if you can, try to avoid touching your face as much as possible, especially with unclean hands. Our eyes, nose, and mouth are easy access points for germs to enter our bodies.
- **When in doubt, don't go out!** If you are feeling under the weather, stay home. If your child is feeling sick, keep them home. It is so important to not only rest when you are starting to get sick or are already under the weather, but also staying home and away from others helps to keep people from also getting sick.
- **Don't Spray It!** Sneezing this time of year is part of life, especially if you suffer from allergies or do have the cold or flu. To help minimize the spread of germs from sneezing or coughing, use a Kleenex or your elbow to protect against rogue spray and to help keep your hands clean.

And remember, most people will have a runny nose, coughs and sneezes these days either from seasonal allergies, the cold or the flu, but if you do feel ill or feel like you need some help to feel better, please contact your Primary Care Provider to determine the best course of treatment for you which may include home care for mild cases or making an appointment to be seen to address more moderate needs. To find a PCP near you, please visit www.dignityhealth.org.