



The bug is back. Are you prepared?

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The flu and cold season is upon us, and with great gusto, I might add! So as you would expect me to say – and I wouldn't want to let you down – I caution you to be sure you are getting plenty of rest and fluids.

"I know, I know," you say. But I wonder just how many of you really *do* know how important these two practices are to your health. Are you really aware the importance rest plays in staying healthy? Sleep is the one thing your health care provider cannot give you. I'm truly amazed at the reactions I get when I tell someone to go home, get their jammies on, get a glass of juice and lay on the couch! My patients often give me a snicker and then say, "Oh, you're serious." You bet your Tootsie Roll I'm serious – *dead serious!*

When you're asleep, your body begins complex repairs at the cellular level. Not only does it repair itself, it fights off germs and bacteria. How can your body fight the flu if you keep it occupied at work, or by staying busy at home while you're supposed to be resting?

Try this experiment.

If you're coming down with a cold, try staying at home. Rest. Do not get dressed! Now, you may laugh, but it is imperative you do not get dressed because psychologically, it is easier to convince yourself to rest when in jammies. Otherwise, you will keep fiddling the day away, trying to do projects, and you might as well have gone to work.

After this, rest, sleep or read "Chicken Soup for the Soul." Eat chicken soup (as a warm fluid, it moistens the nasal walls and keeps you hydrated), drink juice and take your favorite over the counter comfort drug, such as aspirin or Ibuprofen. A good one-a-day multivitamin and vitamin C might help, especially through this cold and flu season. If you don't know which multivitamin to take, ask your pharmacist for his recommendations.

Results are in from national studies. Over 50 percent of you will abort most of the nasty cold symptoms and the other 50 percent will know you need to see your health care provider and get the appropriate treatment. The good news is, everyone will get well quicker, and you won't share germs with everyone else.

It is also a good idea to get a flu shot as you cannot get the flu from the flu shot. I know many people claim they have, but it's just not true as the virus in the vaccine is dead. Benefits of getting a flu shot far outweigh the pain and discomfort of suffering through two weeks filled with fevers, coughing, stuffy nose, sinus headache and those nasty body aches. Plus the flu can turn into a serious illness, such as bronchitis or pneumonia. The flu can be linked to 20,000 deaths nationwide in any given year.

If you're at high risk for influenza, your need for vaccination is crucial. Risk factors include increasing age, respiratory problems and a weak immune system. Get your flu shot early. You'll rest easier knowing you've taken a major precaution against the flu.

Oh, and get some extra shut-eye. You deserve it.