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Forget the Flu! Tips to Reduce Flu Transmission

It's that time of year again – flu season. We do our best to get enough sleep, exercise well and eat fruits and vegetables – but unfortunately, the flu doesn't discriminate.

Unlike colds, which often start with a runny nose and sniffles, the flu can appear unexpectedly, combining fever, fatigue, cough, sore throat, runny or body aches, headache and chills. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea.

A new study has shown that flu virus particles stay in the air for several hours after the infected person has left an area. In order to become infected, you only need to share the air for an hour before you are also infected.

Last year the flu season was relatively mild. Flu shot vaccinations and exposure to a similar virus the year before helped improved rates of immunity. Milder weather also facilitated the reduction of infection rates.

In 2009, with H1N1 crisis, the cleanliness of Canadians peaked. Since then, hand sanitizer sales have dropped 40%. Today, it's reported that 40% of Canadians are not washing their hands correctly and half of the country's homes are not at acceptable levels for house hold hygiene.

What can you do to prevent transmission of the flu?

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water. If water and soap are not available use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Or cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the garbage after you use it.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are sick with the flu.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces where viruses dwell: doorknobs, keyboards, switches, telephones and remote controls.
- Avoid people who have the flu and, if you become ill, stay home 24 hours after your fever is gone (without the use of fever reducing medicine).

Preventing the flu is possible if you take action. Doing your part reduces your likelihood of suffering the flu as well as protecting others who may not fare as well as you could. Getting the flu shot and washing your hands often will prevent the spread of the flu this season.