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Helping Organizations Retain Their Most Valuable Asset

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Tips to Prevent Colds and Flu

A proactive approach to warding off colds and flu is apt to make your whole life healthier. The most effective way to prevent the flu, is to get the flu shot. There are other strategies you can employ as well.

- Wash Your Hands. Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact. The germs can live for hours only to be picked up by the next person who touches the same object.
- Drink Plenty of Fluids. Water flushes your system, washing out the poisons as it rehydrates you. A typical, healthy adult needs eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids each day.
- Get Fresh Air. A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses.
- Don't Smoke. Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe colds and more frequent ones. Even being around smoke profoundly zaps the immune system.
- Cut Alcohol Consumption. Heavy alcohol use destroys the liver, the body's primary filtering system, which means that germs of all kinds won't leave your body as fast.
- Relax. If you can teach yourself to relax, you can activate your immune system on demand. Train yourself to picture an image you find pleasant or calming.

Source: WebMD Inc.

Better Sleep: 1 Bedtime Do's and Don'ts



More than 100 million Americans have trouble sleeping. But did you know that most sleep difficulties (about 80%) are either caused or reinforced by our own behaviors or daily habits?

Getting a good night's rest begins long before you get into bed. The tips below will help you get the most out of your hours in bed.

Guidelines for Better Sleep

* DO stay away from stimulants. Coffee, tea, colas, chocolate and some medications contain caffeine which stimulates the central nervous system and increases blood pressure and heart rate. Drinking a can of cola or cup of coffee in the late afternoon can keep you awake at midnight. Avoid consuming caffeine at least 4 to 6 hours before bedtime. Beware: Sensitivity to caffeine can increase with age.

* DON'T smoke, especially before bed. The nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant. Insomnia is among smokers' greatest complaints. Research shows smokers take longer to fall asleep and wake up more often during the night than nonsmokers. Having a smoke before bed may feel relaxing, but it is actually putting a stimulant into your bloodstream.

* DO retire at regular hours. An erratic schedule can cause problems such as "Sunday night insomnia." This problem often occurs to people who stay up late and sleep late on weekends and then try to switch back to their usual bedtime to prepare for Monday morning. Try to go to bed at roughly the same time each night and, no matter how long you slept, get up at your usual time in the morning.

* DON'T eat heavily before going to bed. Forcing your digestive tract to work overtime interferes with sleep. Also, try not to drink anything after 8 p.m. Often people wake up to go to the bathroom (once or twice a night as you get older is normal).

* DO exercise regularly. Sleep is facilitated by relaxation and exercised muscles relax more easily. Aim for 20 minutes of exercise that increases your heart rate at least three times a week. Important: Don't exercise immediately before bed. Allow yourself at least an hour to cool down after a workout.

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* DON'T use alcohol to induce sleep. A nightcap can lull you to sleep, but alcohol typically produces light, unsettled sleep. Also, using alcohol to fall asleep could lead to dependency. And never mix alcohol with sleeping pills.

* DO get into a relaxing bedtime routine. Set the mood for relaxation before bed. Start letting down about an hour before bedtime: read, listen to music or take a warm bath (not a hot bath, which is actually invigorating).

* DON'T get your mind racing before bed. Bedtime is not the time to be rushing about or planning the following day's events. Set aside time for thinking and planning several hours before bedtime.

* DO make sure your sleeping environment promotes relaxation and sleep. Your bedroom should be quiet, dark and at the proper temperature - in the mid 60s.

* DON'T use your bedroom as an office. This environment will discourage restful thoughts. Use the bedroom for sleep, do not watch TV, listen to the radio, eat, or read in bed.

* DO use imagery or other techniques to put yourself to sleep. Counting sheep is the oldest trick in the book for a simple reason...it works. According to research, this technique distracts both sides of the brain with soothing, repetitive activity. As you count the woolly animals leaping through your mind, you literally bore yourself to sleep.

* DON'T take sleeping pills; they induce less restful sleep and can cause serious problems. Often times, the person relying on sleeping pills is left with his/her original insomnia, plus a drug problem.

NOTE: If you suffer from chronic or severe insomnia, visit your doctor or a sleep disorders clinic to see if there is an underlying medical condition.

5 Ways To Improve Your Productivity

With so much happening and less and less time to handle it all, learning how to improve your productivity could give you the edge you need to get it all done. Here are 5 strategies that can increase your productivity:

1. Schedule your time for work.

Be consistent. Don't do personal things when you are scheduled to work. Make a "To Do" list and prioritize your tasks. A list is most effective for those of us who need to consult a reference or see it in writing. When you have completed a task, cross it off your list. You'll get a real sense of completion and satisfaction as you see your list getting shorter and shorter.

2. Do the most difficult, time consuming, least favorite job first.

Sound crazy? Well, you'll be doing it when you have the most energy and motivation. If you tackle the toughest job first, the rest of your tasks will seem that much easier.

3. Don't allow yourself to get interrupted by other peoples "emergencies."

How many times have you had your tasks and activities planned, so you could finally get caught up with your own work, and all day long other people keep coming to you with their last minute problems that only you can fix? You don't want to say no, you want to be a team player, but you have stuff to get done too, right? Remember, that being a team player also means respecting other's time and realizing that others have responsibilities too. If your co-workers can't grasp this, you have to. Learn to say no in a polite but firm manner, "I would really like to assist you with that, and I know you have a deadline. Unfortunately, I have a project that I must complete for my boss today. If you can come back tomorrow or another time, or better yet, schedule some time with me so that it is on my calendar, I would be more than happy to help you."

4. Organize your files

Set up a system right from the beginning. If you're new to an assignment or job, ask someone who has been doing the job for a while and who seems to excel at it, to give you some tips on how he or she does the job. Don't re-invent the wheel. Avoid the pitfalls and mistakes of being new by seeking out experience and using it to your advantage.

5. Organize your workspace.

The better organized and efficient your workspace, the more time efficient you will be. The time it takes you to search through all of your piles of papers or to remember which cabinet you put that file in could be spent working on the new projects you are being given. Put the things you use most (stapler, tape, scissors etc.) on your desktop in the same place and always put them back in the same place when you are done. Keep a file organizer on your desk for current projects, so they are always at your fingertips. Label your files clearly.

Contact HMS

Don't forget...Human Management Services (HMS) can assist you with workplace issues. If you need help, why not contact an HMS counselor today?

HMS Is Here To Help

Quality sleep is vital to your health, happiness and productivity. If sleep is a problem for you or one of your dependents, contact Human Management Services (HMS) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. A professional HMS counselor can help you assess your situation, help you devise a plan of action, and/or refer you to the most appropriate treatment provider. Why not call an HMS counselor today? We're here to help.

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