

5 HYGIENE PRACTICES TO STOP SPREAD OF FLU VIRUS

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 18 Oct 2022 · C5

With this year's flu season being accompanied by slowly rising COVID-19 cases, experts remind us that staving off the flu virus typically begins with common practices that families can do at home.

“Contrary to popular belief, the flu is caused by a virus different from the common cold, so symptoms tend to last longer and are more severe,” says Dr. Gyneth Bibera, country medical director of GSK Philippines. “Patients will experience the typical runny nose, coughing, headaches, fevers and fatigue, but the severity can often lead to the inability to do daily tasks, the need for doctor consultations or even hospitalization,” she adds.

Here are five things you can do to prevent flu:

Disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Influenza viruses can survive outside the body and generally stay active longer on steel, plastic, and harder surfaces than on fabric and softer materials. They have been known to survive for 24 to 48 hours on hard nonporous surfaces, and eight to 12 hours on cloth, paper and tissues. Regularly disinfecting these surfaces with a household cleaner containing soap or detergent will help stop the spread of the virus. Focus on areas that are frequently touched, such as door handles, light switches, faucets, stair rails or tables.

Toss your trash every day. Many communities have weekly or biweekly garbage collections, but it's worth making a point to dispose of trash every day. Keep a wastebasket outside of the home, in a garage or by the front gate. This prevents contaminated items and germs that cause respiratory illness, like flu, from lingering inside the home.

Launder your linens regularly. Sheets, blankets or pillowcases that are used daily may become infected by viruses. Changing sheets on a weekly basis and washing them with hot water can kill flu viruses that are present. Flu viruses are killed by heat above 75°C.

Practice good hygiene. This includes washing hands frequently, particularly after coughing or sneezing, after using the bathroom, before and after handling food or after coming in contact with someone sick. It also includes not sharing personal items such as pillows, towels, utensils and the like. Of course, covering the mouth when coughing, taking regular showers and other basic hygiene practices are also necessary.

Get your flu vaccines. The World Health Organization recommends that flu shots be administered once every year, which is applicable for both adults and even children when they reach six months old. Getting annual flu vaccines significantly reduces the risk of contracting the flu virus.