



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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(1/3/25) Healthy Habits to Prevent the Spread of Illness-Causing Germs (Simple Tips from Southern 7 Health Department)

It's that time of year again where it seems everyone is coming down with a cold, a "bug", or the dreaded flu. To help keep yourself and family healthy and to prevent the spread of illness-causing germs, Southern 7 Health Department urges everyone to follow a few simple, health tips.

- Wash your hands. You should wash frequently with water and soap for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub containing at least 60% isopropyl alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face. Try not to touch your eyes, mouth, or nose with unwashed hands.
- Cough and/or sneeze into your elbow. Be sure to practice this healthy habit to avoid germy hands.
- Wipe down and disinfect high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, tabletops, countertops, bathroom sinks, toilets, faucet handles, shopping cart handles, and gas pump handles. It's a good idea to keep a bottle of hand sanitizer in your vehicle to use after pumping gas.
- Disinfect hard, nonporous surfaces in your vehicle, including cup holders, steering wheel, door handles, seat buckles, and radio knobs as permitted by the manufacturer's instructions. Always follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfecting of electronics.
- Maintain your space between yourself and others keeping 6 feet of distance whenever possible. Try and avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wear a facemask to help reduce your chance of inhaling viral particles or spreading a virus to someone who may have a weakened immune system.
- Boost your immune system. Proper diet, hydration, exercise, and sleep are all needed to maintaining good health. While a strong immune system doesn't prevent you from getting sick or passing a virus on to others, establishing these habits are beneficial to help maintain your physical health during cold and flu season.
- Stay home when you're sick.

"Since we are now at the peak of the flu and cold season, we need to stay vigilant in preventing the spread of illness-causing germs," said Kimberly Laird, RN and Communicable Disease Program Manager for Southern 7 Health Department. "Covering your mouth when coughing and/or sneezing can decrease the chance of directly sharing a respiratory illness with your loved ones. Flu viruses can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours, so wiping down high touch surfaces and frequent hand washing, or use of a hand sanitizer, can help minimize the indirect spread."

On December 23, IDPH's [Seasonal Respiratory Illness Dashboard](#) indicated that hospital admissions for COVID-19, flu and RSV all ticked up (as a percent of all hospital admissions) in the week ending Dec. 14, 2024. The percentage of emergency department visits due to respiratory illness also increased from 13.8% in the previous week to 14.7%. The state is also continuing to see a rise in ICU admissions due to RSV, driven by children 0-4 years old.

By remembering to follow these tips we can help protect ourselves and others from colds and the flu and help stop the spread of germs. For those who are unvaccinated, public health officials note that it's not too late to get vaccinated. It

takes about two weeks for vaccinations to provide their full level of protection. Getting shots now will offer protection through the cold and flu season that lasts into the spring.

To schedule your vaccination appointment with Southern 7 Health Department, or for more information, call 618-634-2297 or download the Southern 7 app.

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