

## 7 Simple steps can help survive the cold and flu season!

- 1) **Get vaccinated!** Although there is no vaccination for the common cold, the flu vaccine is one of the best weapons against the flu. Flu vaccine is now available, call the Chouteau County Health Department at 622-3771 for times and costs.
- 2) **Cover your cough!** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze. If you use your hand make sure to wash immediately or use an alcohol hand sanitizer. Use a new tissue every time you cough or blow your nose; dispose of old tissues appropriately and wash your hands after use.
- 3) **Wash your hands!** Most cold and flu viruses are spread by hands, not through the air. Touching your mouth, nose, or eyes after shaking the hand of a friend or taking change from a cashier are examples of how these germs can make you sick. Frequent hand washing, especially after coming into contact with other people, will kill the germs that cause cold and flu.
- 4) **Clean your work surfaces!** Viruses that cause colds can survive up to three hours on inanimate objects, so cleaning your work surfaces (desk, phone, etc) with disinfectant may help stop infections.
- 5) **Practice Good Health Habits!** A healthy immune system is a good defense against cold and flu. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. If you suffer from a chronic illness make sure to follow the health plan your provider has given you.
- 6) **Stay at home if you are sick!** This keeps you from spreading the virus to others. Also limit contact with family members who are not sick as much as possible.
- 7) **Don't Smoke!!** Statistics show that smokers get more frequent and severe colds. Smoke dries out your nasal passages and damages your natural protection against germs.

Teach your children these simple steps; they are simple, but they may mean the difference between spending weeks feeling sick or sailing through the cold and flu season without a sniffle.

If you do come down with a cold or the flu, healthcare providers recommend the following:

- Stay at home (avoid work or school where you might infect others)
- Rest in bed as much as possible
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Take Tylenol for fevers, aches and pains
- Use over-the-counter medication to relieve symptoms like stuffiness and cough

Cold and flu symptoms can make you feel horrible, but most can be taken care of at home **without** a visit to your provider. If your symptoms last longer than two weeks you should call your medical provider for advice.