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THIS
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LIVE Healthy

Watch out for germ hot spots in the office—areas that are touched often but cleaned less so.

Stay Flu-Proof This Season

From sleeping in to using vodka in place of hand sanitizer, check out the surprising stay-well secrets that real experts swear by.

By AVIVA PATZ

➔ **YOU'VE GOT TO ACT** fast to fight off colds and flu. Case in point: University of Arizona scientists have found that when someone is sick in an office, it takes only four hours (!) for surfaces like coffeepot handles, copy-machine buttons and the

fridge door to show traces of infectious virus. Considering that the 2012 flu season was one of the worst on record, it's well worth arming yourself against aches, cough, fever and general misery. For reality-tested tips that actually work, we turned to doctors, politicians, makeup artists and other brave souls who are exposed to viruses every day. Steal their strategies to win the war against germs this winter.

EAT AND DRINK RIGHT

01 Lose the booze.

→ "When I'm on trips, I don't drink alcohol. It interferes with sleep quality, and I'm much more likely to get sick when I'm sleep-deprived. I've also read that nightcaps disrupt REM sleep, which is the most restorative part of sleep."

—Kim Mazzolini, a flight attendant with Alaska Airlines



02 Sip tea.

→ "I drink hot black or green tea with lemon

and honey. Drinking the tea and breathing in steam stimulates the cilia—the hair follicles in the nose—to move out germs more efficiently. Lemon thins mucus, and honey is antibacterial."

—Murray Grossan, MD, ear, nose and throat specialist at Cedars-Sinai Hospital, in Los Angeles

03 Get a protein fix.

→ "Research shows that diets that are too low in protein can deplete the immune system. So I make sure to get protein-rich foods throughout the day, especially fish, eggs and yogurt."

—Douglas Kalman, PhD, RD, director of nutrition and applied clinical trials at Miami Research Associates

CLEAN, CLEAN, CLEAN



04 Wipe out.

→ "Gyms are crawling with sweaty towels, dirty sneakers and other germ grossness. Instead of sitting directly on a mat or bench, I'll place a clean towel on it first. Any equipment that I have to touch—like free weights or bicycle handlebars—I'll clean first with antibacterial wipes."

—Franci Cohen, group-exercise instructor and owner of Fuel Fitness, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

How sickness gets started

▶ You're most likely to catch the flu virus through direct transmission—by breathing it in via droplets released after an infected person sneezes or coughs. You can also catch the flu or a cold by touching drops that fall onto surfaces, or by shaking a sick person's hand, and then rubbing your nose or eyes. So keep your hands washed—and off your face!

06 Hit the bottle.

→ "If I don't have any hand sanitizer with me, I'll pour a little vodka on my hands. Vodka's high alcohol content makes it a great disinfectant."

—Anonymous flight attendant

office. I even touch the ATM with it. That way, I avoid picking up germs I might spread to my child."

—Kim Okochi, a mother of two in Secretary, Md.

10 Pamper your nose.

→ "I do a daily nasal rinse with a bulb syringe to flush out viruses and help clear secretions. You can buy nasal saline irrigation at the drugstore—I like NeilMed Sinus Rinse—or make your own: Mix 3 teaspoons iodide-free salt and 1 teaspoon baking soda. Add 1 teaspoon of this mixture to 1 cup distilled or cooled boiled water."

—Jeffrey Demain, MD, director of the Allergy Asthma and Immunology Center of Alaska

PUT UP YOUR DEFENSES

07 Breathe out.

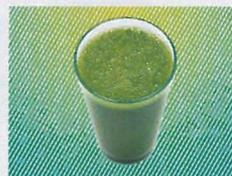
→ "When I'm walking past another person and he is sneezing or coughing, I gently and slowly breathe out until I'm beyond the 6- to 10-foot zone around him. This keeps me from inhaling the air he just contaminated."

—Stafford Broumand, MD, a plastic surgeon in New York City

08 Zinc it.

→ "If I get a scratchy throat and think I might be getting a cold, I pop Cold-Eeze lozenges with zinc for a few days. They relieve symptoms and can get you better faster."

—Marc Leavey, MD, a primary-care physician in Lutherville, Md.



11 Start juicing.

→ "As a paramedic, I never know what germs I'll be encountering. So I drink water constantly to flush toxins out through the lymph system. During cold and flu season, my EMT partner and I start our day by making and drinking juice. We'll use kale, broccoli, apple, arugula, parsley, cucumber, carrots, Swiss chard, lemon and

09 Live by the pen

→ "With an immune-compromised child at home—my son got a bone-marrow transplant when he was a year old to treat Wiskott-Aldrich Syndrome—I've become used to bringing my own pen to the bank, the grocery store, the doctor's

Don't get straight into an elevator in cold weather—grab coffee or walk down the hall to warm up your nasal passages first, so they can better expel viruses.

05 SANITIZE YOUR OFFICE SPACE

"I clean everything that gets touched by lots of people—microwaves, fax-machine keys, doorknobs, elevator buttons, the armrests on my chair—with a good disinfectant at least once a week, even if it looks clean. It's just basic hygiene. Rhinoviruses can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours!"

—Philip Tierno, PhD, author of *The Secret Life of Germs*



Slather on hand sanitizer (or, better yet, wash your hands) after touching.

19 PROTECT YOUR PAWS

"I wash my hands often and pat them fully dry so they don't get flaky, which can allow germs in. Then I moisturize."

—Diane Berson, MD, associate clinical professor of dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College and New York Presbyterian Hospital

mint. Since I don't get my recommended nine servings of whole fruits and vegetables every day (who does?), juicing allows me to drink that amount in concentrated form."

—Kristina Economou, a paramedic in Monterey, Calif.

12 Keep your hands to yourself.

→ "I never use water fountains or the railings on stairs. They've got the prints of hundreds of germ hands (and mouths!), and they don't get sanitized as often as other surfaces, like sinks. I'll use my own water bottle, thank you very much!"

—Cheryl Lassiter, a kindergarten teacher in Atlanta

CARRY THE ESSENTIALS

13 Embrace oil.

→ "I'll use a few drops of lavender essential oil as a natural hand sanitizer on the go."

—Frank Lipman, MD, integrative-medicine practitioner and founder and director of Eleven-Eleven Wellness Center, in New York City

RELAX, ALREADY

14 Release bad energy.

→ "My job is to keep patients calm in the ER, so I treat them with Jin Shin Jyutsu, a form of Japanese light-touch energy therapy. The practice unlocks blocked energy to help the body fight infection. I do it myself every morning—I put my right hand on top of my head and my left

hand in between my eyebrows, and I take relaxed breaths for five minutes."

—Julia Millspaugh, RN, Morristown Medical Center, in Morristown, N.J.

15 Get what you knead.

→ "I receive massages once a month to increase my circulation, which boosts immunity by nourishing cells with more oxygen and blood. It also makes

me relaxed and less stressed, and when you're less stressed, you're less likely to be a germ magnet."

—Christine Nelson, a massage therapist in Las Cruces, N.M.

16 Sweat it.

→ "I run whenever and wherever I possibly can. When I travel, I try to stay in a hotel that has a dry sauna and use it every day. Sweating makes me feel like I'm getting all the toxins and germs out."

—Mike Martinez, a city-council member in Austin, Texas

17 Brush up

→ "Anything I use on people's mouths, like lip brushes, I clean more often than other tools to avoid passing germs around. I clean lipsticks with an alcohol wipe."

—Sonia Kashuk, a makeup artist and founder of Sonia Kashuk Beauty

18 Call it a day.

→ "My strategy is to double down on trying to get enough sleep, even if it's just a power nap on a plane. Research shows that our bodies need seven to eight hours of sleep in order

Flu-proof your home

The gadgets that work—and don't:

✓ Humidifiers

They prevent your mucous membranes from getting dry and cracked, which creates entry points for invading viruses. Research also suggests that higher humidity levels inactivate flu particles, although scientists aren't yet sure why.

✗ Air purifiers

Research is unclear as to whether they eliminate cold or influenza viruses. In fact, in 2011, the Federal Trade Commission ordered one manufacturer to stop claiming that its purifier worked against the flu virus.

✓ Fans

Simply running fans and opening windows will circulate most viral particles in the air right out of a room.

to stimulate an immune response from our 'natural killer cells,' which attack viruses. Sleep is my most reliable defense against infection."

—David Katz, MD, founder of the Yale University Prevention Research Center and author of *Disease-Proof: The Remarkable Truth About What Makes Us Well* ■



20 DON'T TALK DIRTY.

→ "As a doctor, I need to keep my cell phone with me at all times. During the day, I might place it on a counter or use it in between opening doors, pushing elevator buttons or shaking hands with patients or colleagues. Cleaning my phone with a sanitizing wipe regularly cuts back on the germs that get near my face and mouth."

—Dr. Broumand