# Week 1

**Subject: *Germ defense!* Protect yourself during the cold and flu season**

You can’t see the microscopic germs that cause a cold or the flu. However, the effects of these germs are not always just a minor inconvenience. Many people are hit hard by colds and flus, and in some cases, it can evolve into a serious illness. That’s why it’s so important to practice good health and prevention habits during cold and flu season. Remember that colds and flus are contagious and can be passed from person to person (a child, parent, co-worker, or someone with an existing health condition) through droplets that are transmitted when a person talks, sneezes or coughs. This period of high contagiousness can last for more than a week after a person first becomes sick.

That’s why we’ve put together some great information about taking care of yourself during cold and flu season. We call it *Germ defense!* Here are some of the things you’ll learn and tips you’ll receive from the material to prevent seasonal flu each year:

* The World Health Organization suggests a flu vaccination may be one of the most effective defenses against the flu (and you can’t get the flu from the vaccination—that’s a myth!).[[1]](#footnote-1), [[2]](#footnote-2) Keep in mind you may live in a geographical area where your risks for getting the flu are low. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider to determine if the flu vaccination is right for you.
* Antibiotics can’t treat a cold or the flu, at all[[3]](#footnote-3)
* The flu spreads faster in cold weather
* You can be infected by someone who doesn’t yet show symptoms
* Staying hydrated can bolster your immune system (but avoid drinks loaded with sugar)
* Get adequate sleep and try to minimize stress. Both have an effect on how well your immune system works

Keep an eye out for more good information about getting through the cold and flu season successfully.

# Week 2

**Subject: *Germ defense!* Avoiding Cold and Flu Germs in the Workplace**

When people in your office start to get sick, you begin to worry. Will you be the next person to catch that bug that’s going around? Is it a mild cold or a bad one?

It’s so easy for germs to travel from person-to-person in the office. You can get sick from someone coughing or sneezing near you, or from touching a surface that a sick co-worker has also touched.

Fortunately, there are many precautions you can take in the workplace to protect yourself against infection and keep from passing infections on to other people. Here are some examples:

* Wash your hands frequently with hot water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when you touch your eyes, nose or mouth after touching something that is contaminated with germs.
* Avoid going into work if you have the flu as you will likely prolong your own illness and may infect your colleagues. Instead, talk to your manager and co-workers about how you can work remotely on anything urgent.
* Don’t shake hands with anyone, especially if you’re sick or suspect you might be sick. It would be ruder to pass on your germs to them. Just explain that you are sick and offer a friendly smile instead. This is especially important in view of the coronavirus pandemic.
* If you have a cold, throw used tissues into the trash— don’t put them on your desk (the germs will transfer to your desktop).
* Wipe down common surfaces with a disinfectant before you touch them (like doorknobs and elevator buttons).

People are more aware than ever before about how cold and flu season can cause lost workdays, more visits to the doctor, and even hospitalizations. Don’t be self-conscious about taking these precautions (and others we’ll tell you about) at work. Your manager and co-workers will thank you.

1. World Health Organization, “Influenza (Seasonal): Fact sheet,” November 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Key facts about seasonal flu vaccine,” September 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Antibiotics aren't always the answer," March 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)