

As cold and flu season ramps up;

These are common flu germ-ridden places in the office setting show how easy it is to come into contact with viruses that cause seasonal illnesses.

- Computer keyboards
- Door handles
- Break room microwaves and coffee pots
- Shared tools
- Office equipment surfaces

Cleaning frequently touched surfaces is one way to cut down on the number of cold and flu germs that are passed from one co-worker to another, but the flu can be a tough virus to avoid even when a person knows where germs may be hiding. Through tiny droplets that are created when a person talks, coughs, or sneezes, an infected person can spread the flu to others up to about 6 feet away. A person needn't be experiencing symptoms to be infectious; the virus can be passed on a day before symptoms develop and up to a week after a person becomes sick.

According to CDC, the best way to avoid coming down with the flu is to get vaccinated. Beginning with that step, here are the actions you can take to avoid the cold and flu bug and stay healthy this season:

1. **Get the flu shot now.** Don't wait to get vaccinated until outbreaks hit. It takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop and offer protection. The shot, which contains an inactivated virus that cannot cause illness, is recommended for everyone six months old and older.
2. **Wash up.** Hands should be washed often and scrubbed with soap and water for 20 seconds. To make sure you're washing long enough, sing "Happy Birthday" twice (to yourself) while washing and rinsing the germs away.
3. **Keep sanitizer handy.** Hand sanitizer won't clean hands that have dirt on them, but an alcohol-based rub can be an option if your hands aren't visibly dirty and soap and water aren't available.
4. **Keep hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.** Touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth brings germs into the body.
5. **Clean up.** Frequently touched common surfaces, such as computer equipment and telephones, should be kept clean. If you need to use a co-worker's equipment, consider cleaning it first with a disinfectant.
6. **Avoid close contact with ill people.** Avoid shaking hands or coming in close contact with co-workers and others who may have a cold or the flu.
7. **Take care of yourself- ALWAYS. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, and eat nutritious food to be ready to fight infection if a virus does invade your body.**
8. **Cover your cough.** If you find yourself coming down with something, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to help keep germs from spreading to those around you. Used tissues should go in the wastebasket. If no tissue, cough into your elbow.

If you do come down with the flu, get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids mainly water limit sports drinks and juices. Over-the-counter medications may help relieve fever, coughing, and congestion, and a humidifier may make breathing easier.