



SET YOUR
CLOCKS

CHECK YOUR
STOCKS



Cold & flu supplies: What you need when you are home sick

Having a stockpile of supplies in case of an emergency is always a good idea. After all, you never know when you may lose power or water or have to evacuate at a moment's notice. But what about supplies that you would need if you were sick with a really bad cold or the flu and had to stay home for days at a time? If you're sick enough that you can't go to work or school, you shouldn't be running out to the store for supplies and medication and sneezing all over your fellow shoppers.



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Why do I need to have supplies for a cold or the flu?



If you're sick with the flu (or a flu-like illness) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible.

In fact, CDC officials say you should stay at home until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication. That means it could be just you, your cat and talk show episodes for quite a few days. So if it's flu season or if someone you know is sniffing and sneezing, take some time to check your sick-day supplies.



What should I have on hand in case I get a cold or the flu?

At the very least, you know you're going to need tissues and some cold or flu medicine. Don't forget to stock up on liquids, such as decaf tea or soup (but watch out for soups with high sodium, as that can make you more dehydrated).

You should also make sure you have some surface cleaners, disinfectants and paper towels at home, as studies have shown flu viruses spread easily through tissues and can survive on surfaces in your home for up to eight hours. Make sure to throw tissues directly in the trash, and wash your hands afterward. It's important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, kitchen counters and kids' toys) clean by wiping them down with a household cleaner according to directions on the product label.



You'll also need laundry detergent and dish soap. Linens, eating utensils and dishes that are used by a sick person don't need to be cleaned separately, but don't share those items without washing them first. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap. As the influenza virus is destroyed by heat, tumble-dry all your bed sheets and towels on high heat after machine washing.

Do I need to buy masks to care for a sick family member?

In general, if you're not at high risk of becoming ill, you don't have to wear a face mask when taking care of someone at home who has the flu, according to CDC .

But if you are at high risk for flu — because of your age, a chronic disease or other factors — then you shouldn't be a caregiver. If that can't be avoided, then wear a face mask or respirator to protect yourself, says CDC. Surgical-type masks can keep splashes from reaching you as well as stop droplets from reaching the person you are caring for. Don't touch the mask when it is on your face and don't reuse it. After you take off a mask, clean your hands with soap and water.

Another option is an "N95" respirator, which fits snugly and can protect you from inhaling small air-borne particles that may contain viruses.



Stockpiling for colds and the flu: A checklist

Handwashing or hand sanitizers?

Soap and water are still the best way to keep your hands clean and free of germs. But if soap and water aren't available, health officials recommend using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



The best hand sanitizer is one that contains a minimum of 60 percent alcohol, as anything lower just won't do the trick. Remember to double-check the label before using or purchasing the product.

Here's a suggested checklist you can use to prepare yourself or your family for a cold or the flu. Check with your doctor to see if there is anything else you'd need and make adjustments for you or your household:

- Non-prescription medications such as pain relievers, fever reducers, decongestants, anti-diarrheal medication and cough drops
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Thermometer
- Facial tissues
- Face masks or respirator (if recommended)
- Canned or instant soups (look for low sodium)
- Decaffeinated tea
- Heat or ice pack
- Toilet paper
- Blankets
- Laundry detergent
- Household cleaners
- Paper towels
- Soap
- DVDs and books
- Your doctor's phone number

For more tips on creating an emergency preparedness stockpile, visit www.getreadyforflu.org/clocksstocks



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