

Dodge old-fashioned diseases

Once thought to be gone forever, some conditions, like measles and mumps, are now on the rise.

❁ THE REASONS?

The uptick might be caused by an increase in international travel (more people are hopping planes to infected areas), parents deciding against immunizing their children, and even busy schedules (more people are forgetting their booster shots).

One disease, whooping cough, became more common in the 1980s, with recent major outbreaks in California, Michigan and Ohio, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). What's more, defense against this illness is down. Experts used to think the whooping cough vaccine offered recipients eight years of protection, but it can wane after only three years.

❁ THE GOOD NEWS

The data are disturbing, but all these diseases are avoidable.

At right, see how you can protect yourself and your family.

Keep your family healthy this winter

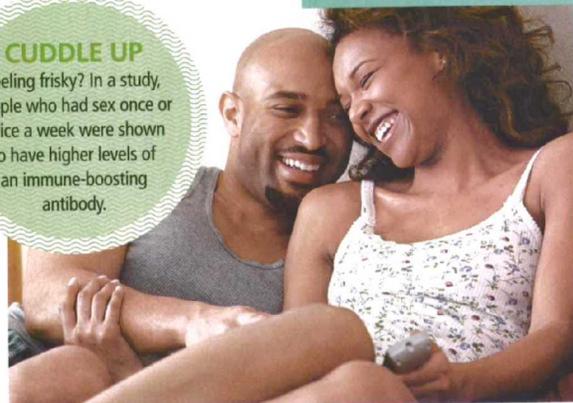
Staying well doesn't have to be complicated. Learn savvy ways to sidestep illness, from a new slew of ailments to the common cold

Every year, you think you have your health bases covered: You take extra vitamins and avoid coughing co-workers; you carefully school your children in hand washing and elbow sneezing. Yet inevitably someone comes home with a snuffle—and you all fall prey. What gives? It turns out that many surprising factors—including the re-emergence of once-defunct diseases—can make you and your family more susceptible to sickness. Fortunately, just a few tweaks can help you all bypass bugs this season.

By Karen Kelly

CUDDLE UP

Feeling frisky? In a study, people who had sex once or twice a week were shown to have higher levels of an immune-boosting antibody.



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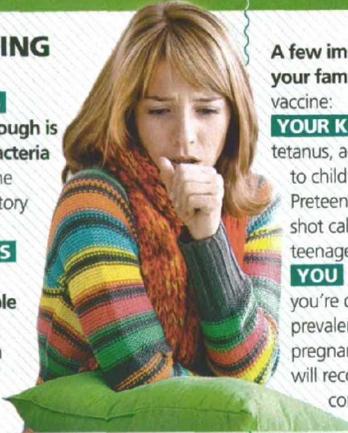
In the news

KNOW THE BASICS

WHOOPING COUGH

WHAT IT IS Whooping cough is caused by bacteria that invade the upper respiratory system.

SYMPTOMS Prolonged, uncontrollable coughing that ends in a "whooping" sound



REDUCE YOUR FAMILY'S RISK

A few immunizations can quickly safeguard your family's health. Here's who should get the vaccine:

YOUR KIDS The first round of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) immunization is administered to children in five doses, typically before they turn 6. Preteens (kids ages 11 to 12) should get a booster shot called Tdap, since immunization usually wanes by teenage years.

YOU If you haven't had a shot since childhood, you're due for another, because the disease is newly prevalent. In addition, if you're thinking about getting pregnant, you should talk to your doctor, who likely will recommend getting a shot before you try to conceive.

TREAT IT

Call the doctor if you suspect that you or your child has whooping cough.

If whooping cough (pertussis) is diagnosed, you or your child will be given a five-day course of the antibiotic azithromycin. This condition is extremely infectious, so ask your doctor whether other family members should also receive preventive antibiotics.



MUMPS

WHAT IT IS It is caused by a virus that targets the salivary glands.

SYMPTOMS Headache, muscle ache, loss of appetite, fatigue and high fever, followed 24 hours later by tender, swollen glands (detectable under the ears)



The mumps vaccine is administered in a measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) or measles-mumps-rubella-varicella (MMRV) vaccine. It's designed to last a lifetime. Here's who should get it and when:

YOUR KIDS They should receive the first dose of mumps vaccine at 12 to 15 months. The second dose is recommended between age 4 and 6. Two doses of the vaccine are needed for protection.

YOU If you had mumps or were vaccinated as a kid, you are likely protected. If a doctor didn't diagnose mumps and you never had a vaccine, look into getting a shot.

There is no treatment for mumps—all you can do is address the symptoms.

If your children come down with this contagious disease, isolate yourself (or them) if you have not been vaccinated. If you have the mumps, get plenty of rest, take analgesics and apply warm or cold packs to the inflamed glands.

MEASLES

WHAT IT IS One of the most infectious illnesses in the world, measles is an infection caused by the rubeola virus.

SYMPTOMS Fever, dry cough, sore throat, sensitivity to light, tiny white spots inside the mouth on the inner lining of the cheek, and a skin rash made up of large, flat, red blotches

Because measles is so contagious, spending time in any public place can put you at risk. Wash your hands after public outings. Get your family vaccinated with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine.



Call your doctor if you believe you or your child has been exposed to the virus.

An infected person should be quarantined from the time symptoms are noticed until five days after the rash appears. Get lots of rest and fluids, and take pain medication for the fever and headache.

SHINGLES

WHAT IT IS One in three people will get shingles in his or her lifetime, the CDC says. Shingles is caused by the same strain that spurs chicken pox. After you recover from chicken pox, the virus can stay dormant and can reactivate years later as shingles. That is true even if you don't remember ever having chicken pox.

SYMPTOMS Headache, loss of appetite, blurry vision, fatigue, an itching or tingling sensation on the skin, chills, hearing loss, joint pain, abdominal pain, swollen glands and a rash of fluid-filled blisters

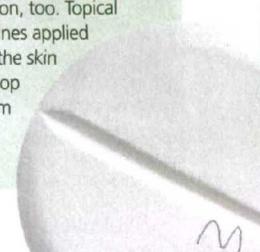
Have everyone get the chicken pox (varicella) vaccine. The reason: Unless you have been vaccinated against chicken pox, you can contract the disease from someone who has shingles. Experts say that up to 90 percent of people who receive the vaccine will not get chicken pox. Those who do will get a milder case.

YOUR KIDS, AT AGES 12 TO 15 MONTHS The chicken pox vaccine should be given as a routine immunization to all children at or beyond 1 year of age.

ADULTS If you haven't had chicken pox, get two doses of the varicella vaccine four to eight weeks apart. (The second one raises the vaccine's effectiveness from 75 percent to 99 percent.) For adults 60 and older: Get the shingles (herpes zoster) vaccine, even if you've never had chicken pox. Senior citizens can still contract it and risk complications.

There's no cure for shingles, but your doctor likely will prescribe an antiviral medicine, such as acyclovir,

to help fight pain and reduce the duration of the outbreak. An over-the-counter pill such as acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen might help pain and inflammation, too. Topical antihistamines applied directly to the skin can help stop blisters from becoming infected.



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In the news

Stop the sickness cycle

Surprise! Many seemingly innocent habits can make or break your health. Here are ones to avoid and those worth keeping.

DON'T

- **GO OVERBOARD ON THE SWEET STUFF.** Eating sugar-laden foods can decrease your immunity, setting the stage for sickness. A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that taking in 100 grams of sugar (think three cans of soda) significantly hampered infection-fighting white blood cells for up to five hours.
- **EAT A LOT OF DAIRY.** Feel a cold coming on? Dodge milk products. Although foods such as milk and cheeses are filled with bone-building calcium, their proteins can make existing phlegm thicker and more irritating to throat and sinus passages. That can lead to uncomfortable upper-respiratory symptoms, like coughing, and cause clogging, which sets the stage for a painful sinus or throat infection.
- **OVERIMBIBE AT HAPPY HOUR.** Alcohol weakens your

white blood cells' ability to fight off infections, experts say, so limit your consumption of spirits when you're trying to stay well.

DO

- **ALLOW YOURSELF AMPLE REST.** Women who get less than eight hours of nightly shut-eye are more at risk of contracting colds and the flu than women who get more sleep, experts say. While you snooze, your immune system



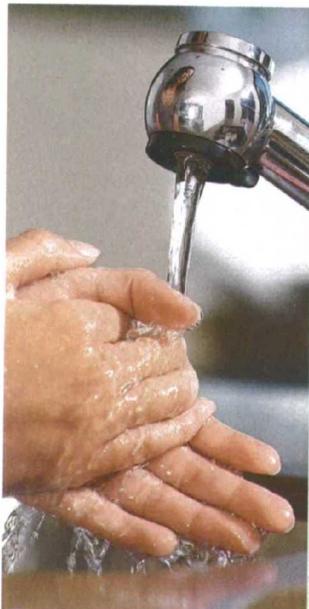
Did you know?
Although flu season starts in the fall, most people who come down with the virus do so in January and February—or even as late as May, according to the CDC.

works to produce potent cytokines, infection-fighting proteins. Your body makes less of those compounds during periods of sleep deprivation.

- **BREAK A SWEAT.** A small but consistent amount of exercise—30 minutes per day—can ramp up immunity. Experts suspect that during a moderate

workout immune cells circulate through the body faster, making them better able to kill bacteria and viruses.

- **SQUASH STRESS.** Chronic tension can cause your body to pump out hefty amounts of the hormone cortisol, weakening your natural defenses. Unwind with gentle yoga, deep breathing or meditation 10 minutes a day to shed lingering stress.



Stay healthy with on-the-spot strategies

Here's a plan to help you shrink your number of sick days.

- ✳️ **WASH WELL—AND OFTEN.** Scrubbing your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds (the time it takes to hum "Happy Birthday") can ward off sickness—but frequency is also key. In a study from the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, recruits who washed their hands at least five times a day saw a 45 percent decrease in respiratory illnesses from the previous year.
- ✳️ **SLEUTH OUT NASTY HOT SPOTS.** Take precautions when encountering commonly touched areas. When pressing an elevator button, for instance, use your knuckle, not a

fingertip, and you'll be less likely to contaminate yourself. Use your own pens—especially in high-traffic areas, like banks and pharmacies. Shared items there can be germ magnets. Also, wipe down your TV remote and family computer keyboard with a disinfectant at least once per week—more often if someone in your household is sick.

- ✳️ **TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION.** If the person next to you sneezes, quickly turn away for a count of 10, holding your breath and shutting your eyes to prevent the germy spray from seeping into your eyes and mouth.

- ✳️ **WORK OUT YOUR KINKS.** A good back rub can keep bugs at bay. Kneading tense muscles helps produce more white blood cells, which help the body fight viruses and other pathogens, according to researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Massage also helps slash levels of the stress hormone cortisol, so your immune cells get a boost. Try pressing and kneading the back of your shoulder and neck with one hand. Repeat on the other side.
- ✳️ **SIP SOUP.** Feel lousy? A big bowl of chicken noodle can soothe symptoms, University of Nebraska researchers say.

Sources: Sharon Nachman, MD, a pediatric infectious diseases specialist at Stony Brook Long Island Children's Hospital in New York; Julia Pivow, MD, chief of the pediatric infectious diseases section at the Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey; Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, medical director, Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers

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