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DOING THE RIGHT THING DURING FLU SEASON How Etiquette Can Protect You from Becoming “That Guy” with Flu

Knowing appropriate flu etiquette is an important step in preventing flu transmission. Why? Because no one wants to be “That Guy” who spreads the flu to others. Following are flu etiquette tips from the Emily Post Institute, which we should all remember:



- **Be proactive.** Protect yourself from seasonal influenza by getting vaccinated every year.
- **Lend a helping hand.** Keep hand sanitizer and tissues with you at all times. If you end up with a cougher or sneezer next to you, just ask them to protect others by offering a tissue or spritz of alcohol-based sanitizer.
- **Share space, not the flu.** Flu is highly contagious. Covering sneezes and coughs is a good habit all year round, especially during flu season. The flu virus can spread up to six feet away from coughing, sneezing, or even just talking.
- **Hands down—the way to go.** It’s classic good manners to keep your hands below your shoulders when in public. The idea is to avoid touching your face, which may also help keep you from getting sick after rubbing your nose, mouth or eyes with unclean hands.
- **Be informed and show concern.** Flu may be treatable with prescription flu medicines. If someone near you is exhibiting signs of the flu – fever, aches, chills, tiredness – encourage them to see a doctor quickly. Don’t feel uncomfortable. Just tell them, “I’m worried about you. I think you should see a doctor.”

Think you have flu etiquette nailed? Showcase your knowledge by logging onto the FluFACTS Facebook page to take quizzes from Anna Post of the Emily Post Institute and see how you rank against others.



Travel Flu Etiquette



- **Keep your hands to yourself.** Going on a cruise? Check your cruise ship’s policy about handshakes. Some ships request guests refrain from shaking hands to keep the spread of illness down. Instead, make eye contact, smile, nod your head, and say, “It’s so nice to meet you.”
- **Should you be on the ‘no fly’ list?** Travel can be unavoidable, even when you’re sick. If staying home isn’t an option, wash your hands often and show fellow travelers you have their health in mind by bringing tissues and hand sanitizer on the flight.

- **Be prepared when out of town.** Remember, flu comes on fast and can sideline you for days. If you are experiencing a sudden onset of a fever, aches and chills, check in with your doctor before departing. If you have the flu, your doctor may prescribe an antiviral flu medicine. Out of town? Download the free “Fight the Flu” iPhone app to locate nearby pharmacies and urgent care clinics in your zip code.
- **The cold shoulder.** When stuck in a tight, crowded space, turn away from others—or better yet, move away if you can—and cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Your seatmate will appreciate the extra effort!
- **If you must, you must.** No one likes to be the etiquette police, and it’s tough to point out someone’s behavior mid-flight with hours left to go. However, flu is highly contagious. If you must say something, try, “I can see you’re not feeling well—would you mind covering your mouth when you cough? Thanks.”

Parenting Flu Etiquette



- **Support your children and the school system.** An able body supports an able mind. Don’t send sick kids to school—they’ll easily spread the flu virus. Instead, take them to the doctor as soon as possible. They may get a prescription for an antiviral flu medicine.
- **“Cover your mouth!” doesn’t cover it anymore—At least, not with your hands.** Teach kids to sneeze or cough into a tissue and throw it away, or, if they don’t have one, into their elbow. Encourage kids to do so by calling this the “Dracula Cough.”
- **Your house, your rules.** It’s okay to ask your child’s friends to wash up when they are at your house for a play date. Include them in the request from the beginning, “Okay kids, please both go wash your hands before dinner.”
- **Help another mother out.** If you’re in charge of someone else’s child and they have flu symptoms, call his or her parents right away. “Your daughter is running a fever and feels achy, and I’m worried for her and for the other kids. How soon can you pick her up?”
- **Make a team effort.** Once your child has been diagnosed with flu, be sure his teachers and coaches know why they are out. Influenza is highly contagious. Viruses can spread through a sports team or scout troop in the blink of an eye. Talk to kids about not sharing team water bottles and let coaches and other activity leaders know right away if your child is diagnosed with the flu so these adults can be on alert for a possible flu outbreak that may sideline the other students.

Society Flu Etiquette



- **Keep your distance.** Normally it would be rude to cancel on a dinner party or big event at the last minute, but if you’re sick, call with your regrets and instead, go see your doctor. If your spouse is healthy, encourage them to go to the event alone.
- **Call it off.** When you’re the host, cancelling a party because you’re sick after weeks of planning feels like a drag. But you’ll be better off resting up and your friends will thank you for keeping them healthy.
- **No double dipping!** Thank you “Seinfeld” for making this common knowledge. Also, avoid sharing food or drinks with anyone else, since this is an easy way to spread the flu virus.

- **Spread the news, not the flu.** After having spent the evening out with friends, if you are diagnosed with the flu, be sure to let the hostess know. There is a chance you were contagious before you felt sick, as many adults are contagious one day before experiencing symptoms.
- **Stop the “sick cycle.”** When you are home sick, let your Facebook network know you have the flu. This will bring you lots of “get well” messages, and it will allow you to help alert others nearby that influenza is circulating and they should be alert to symptoms.

Workplace Flu Etiquette



- **Work your options.** Sick days were invented for a reason! If you’re under the weather, don’t be a hero—stay home. Even if you feel well enough to go in, it’s better to work remotely than to spread the flu virus and get others sick.
- **It’s me, not you.** If your client offers their hand to you after coughing or sneezing into it, you have two options. Shake hands and then go wash up, or simply smile and say, “Forgive me, I can’t shake hands, but it’s nice to see you.”
- **Don’t delay.** If you have flu symptoms at work, let your boss know right away that you need to get to the doctor. Just let him or her know, “I don’t feel well—I need to see a doctor. I think I might have the flu.” Better to have others pitch in while you’re gone than to have the whole team out.
 - If you work in an office, say, “I’ve got the flu, and will be out for the next few days. I’ll call and check in, and as I’m feeling better I’ll work remotely and join meetings via conference call.”
 - As a manager, say, “It’s important to visit your doctor—it might be the flu. I want you to stay home—no sense getting anyone else sick!”

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