

Cold Prevention

The Bible provides specific instructions for how to prevent the spread of infection.

Are you dreading the onset of the cold season? If so, you're not alone. Most people can't count the number of times they or someone in their family has been down with a cold at this time of year. Colds are probably the most common of all infectious diseases. For this reason, it's important to know what they are, how they are transmitted and what we can do to prevent them.

A cold is an infection of the upper respiratory tract, which includes the nose and throat. Despite what many people think about the transmission of colds, the viruses that cause them are usually transmitted by direct contact with the hands. The hands then touch the mouth, nose or eyes, and the virus multiplies in the nose.

Sneezing, coughing, runny nose, sore throat and headache all are symptoms associated with the common cold. The symptoms, which generally last from two to 14 days, are probably the result of the body's immune response to the virus.

This response causes inflammation in the lining of the nose, resulting in sneezing and a blocked, runny nose. Fluid may drain from the nose to the throat, causing soreness, and from the back of the throat to the chest, causing coughing. In some cases, colds may lead to secondary bacterial infections that require treatment with antibiotics.

Many people have the misconception that colds are caused by cold weather and that not dressing properly for the weather conditions will lead to the illness. Others think that a person must be ill or have a weakened immune system to be

susceptible to colds.

The truth is, colds are caused by viruses. In order to get sick from the viruses that cause colds, you must come into contact with them. They must attach to your cells and multiply within your cells to cause infection. Although not dressing properly for the weather conditions is probably not a good idea, there is no direct evidence that a person can contract a cold because of it.

Also, a person need not have a weakened immune system to be susceptible to infections with cold viruses. In a study involving healthy adults, 95 percent became infected when cold viruses were administered through the nose. Of those, a large percentage developed symptoms associated with the common cold.

More than 200 viruses are known to cause colds, and to date, there is no vaccine. There are so many different types or strains of cold viruses that it is difficult to develop a vaccine to provide protection from them all.

Most colds in the U.S. occur during the fall and winter months. The incidence for colds increases slowly beginning in late August and early September and remains high until the spring months.

Believe it or not, the Bible provides specific instructions for how to prevent the spread of infection. It specifically describes what sickness is (a discharge—i.e., fluid or mucus) and emphasizes the importance of keeping one's distance from those who are ill and washing (bathing) to prevent infection (see Lev. 15:5,7,11,13).

The following preventive measures, now suggested by health-

care professionals, are in line with these biblical recommendations:

- » Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- » Wash your hands often, especially after coming in contact with objects handled by someone who is sick.
- » Avoid touching your face when you are around people who are sick.

Colds can affect people of all ages, and there is no cure for them. Fortunately, applying the simple preventive practices described above can greatly reduce the risks of infection.