



Safety Scene

Aaaah-Choo: Cold & Flu Season Is Around the Corner

by Molly E. Butz

It's that time of year again...with influenza making the rounds, make sure you are armed with the information to stay healthy!



Although the connections between good health and safety may not always be obvious, it's important to recognize that good health does play a big part in safety at work. With cold and flu season upon us, understanding the signs and symptoms of the flu and other common respiratory ailments, and knowing the side-effects of over-the-counter medications can mean the difference between having a good day at work or a really bad one. And let's be honest, if you are sick, you're probably not working "up to par" and you're infecting your co-workers, too!

Common Cold vs. Influenza

First, let's do away with one of the most common misconceptions: Influenza (flu), much like the common cold, is a respiratory illness, and its primary symptoms do not involve nausea and vomiting. Instead, both the common cold and the flu are caused by different viruses that produce similar symptoms such as stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and coughing. However, even though it can sometimes be hard to distinguish between a cold and the flu, there are a few differences in the symptoms that may help you decide.

The following chart lists the symptoms of both the common cold and influenza and compares them. As you can see, symptoms like fever, aches, excessive fatigue, and cough are more common and intense with the flu whereas colds, in general, carry milder symptoms. The other downside, apart from the miserable symptoms, is that the flu can also lead to more serious health concerns including pneumonia, bacterial infections, or even hospitalization.

SYMPTOM	COLD	INFLUENZA
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high (102-104F); lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General Aches, Pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, Weakness	Quite mild	Can last up to 2-3 weeks
Extreme Exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort, Cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common; can become severe

SOURCE: The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, April 2001.

Treatment

If you can catch the flu early, it can be treated by a doctor using one of a handful of antiviral prescription drugs, but for the majority of cases all you need to do is get plenty of rest and fluids and take over-the-counter (OTC) medications to relieve your symptoms. The same is true for the common cold, which can also be treated with OTC medications.

Be realistic, and if you're that sick, stay home! Not only will you be working at a physical and mental deficit, you're also probably infecting your co-workers. However, if you find that, like many seasonal ailments (including colds), your symptoms are simply a nuisance, you won't need any time away from work and can treat with something OTC. Just remember to read all of the labels on your OTC medications carefully so you know of any possible drug interactions and side effects. Some OTC cold remedies can make you feel drowsy or present other potentially hazardous risks especially in a manufacturing environment where dangerous equipment and moving vehicles are being used.

Prevention

If you'd like to avoid the cold and flu all-together, it's good to remember a handful of common sense actions that can help you stay healthy. (And if you think you might be really likely to get the flu, consider a flu shot.)

- 1. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.** Respiratory viruses mainly spread from person to person through coughs and sneezes. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you do not have one available, cover your mouth and nose with your hand and then clean your hands immediately.
- 2. Clean your hands often.** When soap and water are available, wash your hands frequently and for at least 15-20 seconds. If you don't have soap and water available, you can use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.
- 3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some for two hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks and tables.
- 4. Practice good health habits.** Maintaining a well-balanced diet can help you stay healthy through the cold and flu season. In addition, get plenty of sleep, be physically active, drink plenty of fluids and manage your stress levels. If your stress levels are high, your body is more susceptible to illness.

Staying healthy this season doesn't need to be a challenge, but it should be a priority. Just a few simple steps can keep you healthy season long. And most importantly, be sensible; if your symptoms get much worse or last for a long time, schedule an appointment to see your doctor! Safety (and health) first! **SBC**

To pose a question for this column or to learn more about WTCA's Operation Safety Program, contact WTCA Staff at 608/274-4849, email wtca@sbcindustry.com, or view the Operation Safety demonstration online at www.wtcalco.com.

- Sources:**
1. Questions & Answer: Colds versus Flu (www.cdc.gov)
 2. The COLD AND FLU Survival Guide (www.webmd.com)

MAKE YOUR WOOD WASTE WORK FOR YOU!



It just makes sense to use your wood scraps for fuel. Every BTU generated from wood waste eliminates the need to pay for a BTU from other costly fuels.

BCS WOOD FIRED SHOP HEATERS:

- Cost-Effective Heating
- All-Steel Construction
- Rugged and Dependable
- Environmentally-Friendly
- Twenty Year Proven Design
- Easy to Use and Maintain



BIOMASS COMBUSTION SYSTEMS, INC.

Making your wood waste work for you. www.biomasscombustion.com

For information call 508-798-5970 or email info@biomasscombustion.com

For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/biomass.htm. See additional ad on page 87.



BOSS Tiedowns and Strapping

Direct from our factory to you

Blake Bailey
PO Box 769
Wells, Texas 75976
Phone: 936.867.4801
Fax: 936.867.4802
www.boss-strapping.com

For reader service, go to www.sbcmag.info/boss.htm

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS™

THE FUTURE OF FRAMING

www.sbcmag.info

Dear Reader:

Copyright © 2006 by Truss Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint materials from **SBC Magazine**, call 608/310-6706 or email editor@sbcmag.info.

The mission of **Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC)** is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing of structural building components to ensure growth and continuity, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC will take a leadership role on behalf of the component industry in disseminating technical and marketplace information, and will maintain advisory committees consisting of the most knowledgeable professionals in the industry. The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the authors and those quoted solely, and are not necessarily the opinions of any affiliated association (WTCA) .



6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53719
608/310-6706 phone • 608/271-7006 fax
www.sbcmag.info • admgr@sbcmag.info