Topic 284: Avoiding the Common Cold

Introductions: The flu and cold season is again upon us. What is the Common Cold? More than 200 viruses are responsible for the misery attributed to the Common Cold. With no cure in sight, people spend billions of dollars every year trying to relieve cold symptoms. The Common Cold is an infection of the head and chest, caused by a virus. It can affect your nose, throat, sinuses, ears, and vocal cords. It is the most frequently occurring human illness and can be avoided by simply using good techniques of personal hygiene, sanitation, and good housekeeping.

How does the Common Cold occur?
- Colds are not caused by cold weather.
- Some factors may include excessive fatigue and emotional distress.
- The virus is transmitted from person to person by direct physical contact (or by touching your face after direct contact), or by indirect contact (such as sharing food, drinks, or other utensils).

What are the signs of a cold?
- 1 to 3 days after infection, symptoms start with a sore throat, some weakness, congestion, and scratchy eyes.
- Sneezing, runny nose, headache, chills, and a mild fever may follow.
- These symptoms may last up to 10 days. It is normally not necessary to stop working.

How should a Common Cold be treated?
- A person with a cold should stay warm and comfortable and try to avoid spreading the infection to others.
- Stop smoking while ill with a cold.
- Drink plenty of fluids to help flush out your system.
- You can usually take care of yourself without visiting a doctor.
- For a runny nose, take antihistamines; however, they can cause drowsiness and make you feel sluggish when driving, operating equipment, or while engaged in operations requiring alertness.
- For a sore throat, use cough drops or gargle with warm salt water.
- For coughing and congestion, take cough syrup.

Occasionally a cold or cough may be a sign of a more serious condition. A doctor should be consulted if symptoms linger for more than a week, especially if chest pain develops, or a cough produces dark sputum. Fever and pain are unlikely to accompany a Common Cold and may indicate influenza or a bacterial infection.

These symptoms indicate a virus that is not a cold:
- If you experience high fever not relieved by aspirin, Tylenol, or ibuprofen.
- If you have a persistent severe sore throat or your throat has white spots.
- If you have chest pain or difficulty breathing.

How can you prevent catching a cold?
- The best preventive measures involve good hygiene.
- Because many cold viruses are spread by contact with infected secretions, frequent hand washing, careful disposal of used tissue, and cleaning items and surfaces can help reduce the spread.

To avoid passing the virus to others:
- Again, the practice of good hygiene is important.
- Cover your mouth and nose (preferably with tissue) when you cough or sneeze.

Conclusion: Although the cure for the Common Cold has yet to be discovered, there are measures that can be taken to avoid catching one in the first place. Follow these tips to help avoid the discomfort from needlessly catching and spreading of the Common Cold!

Work Site Review

Employee Signatures: (My signature attests and verifies my understanding of and agreement to comply with, all company safety policies and regulations, and that I have not suffered, experienced, or sustained any recent job-related injury or illness.)

Foreman/Supervisor’s Signature:

The first aid information provided is intended to be general in nature and is based upon the “best available” guidelines. No results either general or specific are represented or guaranteed. These guidelines do not supersede local, state, or federal regulations and must not be construed as a substitute for, or legal interpretation of, any OSHA regulations.