

## Beware of heartburn

(NAPS)—If you think heartburn in America is on the decline due to the availability of over-the-counter (OTC) medications, think again!

A recent study found that more than 21 million adults, a number up from 19 million in 1995, may be suffering from chronic heartburn that could be associated with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

The National GERD in America Survey, found that while one in five adults has tried over-the-counter acid suppressors, the majority of these heartburn sufferers claim that these medications have not provided adequate relief of their symptoms. Many of these people may have a more

serious condition called GERD and may benefit from seeing a physician.

GERD is the result of a physical condition and occurs when harsh stomach acid splashes back into the esophagus. Many GERD sufferers incorrectly blame their symptoms on lifestyle and eating habits.

Persistent heartburn may signal GERD and other more serious complications such as erosion of the esophagus and even Barrett's Esophagus, a precursor to cancer. That's why individuals experiencing heartburn on two or more days a week should see their doctor to find out if they have GERD and get the right treatment.

## Colds are nothing to sneeze about

(NAPS)—Most of us are familiar with the scratchy throat, watery eyes, stuffed-up head and out-of-sorts feeling otherwise known as the common cold. Did you know that the average adult catches two to four of them a year?

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that more than 23 million days of work are lost annually due to the pesky common cold.

Experts say that by the time the symptoms kick in, your body's well on its way to shedding the virus and healing itself. The common cold takes about a week to 10 days to run its course.

There's still no cure for colds, largely because 200 or more different varieties of viruses cause them. But there are smart habits you can adopt to avoid sneezing, wheezing and sniffing your way through another cold season.

Wash your hands frequently. It's the single most important thing you can do to avoid catching a cold or passing one on to others.

Although washing up with soap and water will usually do the trick, most doctors recommend using an antibacterial soap because it kills most of the bacteria we are commonly exposed to and also slows down the growth of bacteria that we pick up on our hands so we don't pass on "germs."

In fact, 63 percent of family physicians polled recently agree

that antibacterial soap is more effective than regular soap and warm water for helping to kill germs and bacteria.

Be sure to select one that combines special moisturizing ingredients

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Use tissues. Once a handkerchief is used it remains contaminated until it's washed. Paper tissues, however, can be thrown out immediately or, even better, flushed down the toilet.

Hands off your face. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent bacteria on your fingers from getting inside your body. Also wash your hands before inserting contact lenses.

Always cover your nose. And your mouth, too. This helps to contain the spray after you sneeze or cough. Again, don't forget to wash your hands.

Keep your distance. Try to stay at least three feet away from coughers or sneezers, which is how far airborne cold particles from a short-range cough or sneeze can travel.



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