How are you feeling today? I hope you are feeling well and that you will enjoy a winter without having a cold or the flu.

Unfortunately, when you aren’t feeling so well, it is difficult for you and your family. The germs can spread so easily between family members and coworkers. We try our best to prevent it. You made sure that we were all washing your hands. You made sure that everyone was getting enough sleep. You made sure that you were eating healthy meals. But sometimes all the precautions we take you can still get sick. There are still things you can do to help you and your family get well soon.

Here are the top five things I do to prevent getting sick or, if we do get sick, to help us get better fast:

1. **Wash hands frequently.** Washing hands correctly is the best way to stop germs from spreading from one person to another. Wash hands after wiping noses, coughing, going to the bathroom, and before every meal and snack.

2. **Drink plenty of fluids.** Most people need to drink at least eight cups of fluids every day. When we are sick, we need even more, especially if we have a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting. Choose fluids that taste good and are soothing to you. I usually choose hot tea because it feels good on my dry, scratchy throat and I like the taste of it. Others may prefer 100% fruit juice when they are sick.

3. **Eat fruits and vegetables.** Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals that can help our immune systems fight off germs.

4. **Eat chicken noodle soup.** Eating chicken noodle soup when sick has many benefits. The warm broth soothes a sore throat and provides fluids. The vegetables and whole grain noodles supply or bodies with vitamins and minerals. The chicken is a lean protein that can help our immune systems. I try to make a large batch of chicken noodle soup and then freeze it in smaller containers so it is ready to go when I am sick and not feeling like cooking. Spend Smart. Eat Smart has a wide variety of soup recipes.

5. **Get plenty of sleep.** Most adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Children need more. When we are sick, we need even more sleep than usual to heal. It is ok to call in sick to work or school to get some extra rest when sick. This has an added bonus of not spreading your germs to family and friends.
Yard & Garden: Protect Landscape against Winter Deicing chemicals.

Winter has officially begun in Iowa, and with it come snow and ice. Life keeps rolling in winter, which means the application of deicing salt and other measures to keep roads open and prevent slickness and falls on hard outdoor surfaces. Unfortunately, these measures can have negative effects on the landscape.

Here are some tips from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach horticulturists on how to handle winter deicing chemicals. To have additional questions answered, contact the ISU Hortline at 515-294-3108 or hortline@iastate.edu.

What effects do deicing compounds have on landscape plants?

Deicing salts, such as NaCl, CaCl2, KCl and MgCl2, can damage landscape plants when excessive amounts accumulate in the soil. Salts affect plant growth in several ways. When high levels of salt are present in the soil, plants are unable to absorb sufficient water even though soil moisture is plentiful. Plants suffer a salt-induced water shortage termed “physiological drought.” High levels of salt restrict the uptake of essential nutrients by plant roots. Excessive amounts of sodium and chloride ions in plant tissue are toxic to many plants. Soil structure is damaged by high levels of sodium. Salt deposited directly on plant foliage can cause dehydration of plant tissue.

What are the symptoms of deicing salt injury to trees and shrubs?

The symptoms of salt injury to deciduous trees and shrubs include stunted growth, marginal leaf scorch, early fall coloration, and twig dieback. Accumulation of salt in the soil over several years may result in progressive decline and eventual death.

Salt damage to evergreens results in yellowing or browning of the needles and twig dieback. Evergreens near heavily salted roadways often are damaged by salt spray. Spray damage is most severe on the side of the plant nearest the highway.

How can I prevent damage to trees and shrubs from deicing salts?

Homeowners can minimize salt damage by using deicing salts prudently. Before applying salt, wait until the precipitation has ended and remove as much of the ice and snow as possible. Use deicing salts at rates sufficient to loosen ice and snow from driveways and sidewalks, then remove the loosened ice and snow with a shovel. (Deicing salts need to be applied at much higher rates to completely melt ice and snow.) Mix salt with abrasive materials, such as sand or kitty litter.

Fifty pounds of sand mixed with one pound of salt works effectively. Avoid piling salt-laden snow and ice around trees and shrubs. While the amount of salt applied to major roadways cannot be controlled, steps can be taken to minimize damage. As soon as the ground thaws in early spring, heavily water areas where salt accumulates over winter.

A thorough soaking should help flush the salt from the root zone of plants. If possible, alter the drainage pattern so winter run-off drains away from ornamental plants. When planting trees near major streets or highways, select salt tolerant tree species. Bur oak, northern red oak, honeylocust, northern catalpa, Kentucky coffee tree, horse chestnut and eastern red-cedar are salt tolerant tree species.
What’s for Dinner??

The day has somehow gotten away from you—it’s later than you think; the family is hungry and you haven’t begun to fix dinner, let alone think about what to fix. One look in the freezer and you spot a frozen brick of ground beef. What’s the quickest way to turn the brick into a quick and delicious beef meal? Here is what you need: microwave-safe storage bag (gallon size), microwave, four minutes, and these simple steps. Transfer your frozen ground beef from its packaging to the gallon-size storage bag.

- Seal the storage bag, leaving a small opening for steam to escape (about 1/2 inch or size of a pencil).
- Heat the bag in the microwave on a microwave-safe plate for one minute on HIGH.
- Flip the bag over.
- Heat on HIGH for one more minute; wait for one minute.
- Remove the beef from the microwave and massage the bag for 10 seconds.

If needed, heat on HIGH for 30 seconds longer, followed by 30 seconds of rest. The leaner the ground beef, the less time in the microwave.

TIP: the beef should not be HOT to the touch; just thaw it enough to form it into a shape. Immediately cook your beef to 160°F.

Source: www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/groundbeeftawing

Clean Up!

Cleaning the house may seem like the last thing that promotes physical activity and learning, but it is! Cleaning works all your major muscle groups, which makes it a good way to be physically active. Also, by using regular household items to clean, children can take part in fun chemistry “experiments,” and it can save some money by reducing the use of store bought household cleaners.

So the next time your house needs to be cleaned, get your children (or grandchildren) involved doing something new and different; instead of asking them to clean the tub with bathroom cleaner, have them create a chemistry experiment with baking soda and vinegar in the bathtub, and have them see what a great job that does of scrubbing away scum. Invite them to mop the kitchen floor with vinegar and water and see how shiny it makes it; after all, how often do kids get a chance to spill water all over the floor on purpose. Work alongside your children (or grandchildren), and play energetic music to make house cleaning a fun way to be active and learn together. For more information about how you can promote wellness in your family visit www.sparkpe.org.
Family Fun Night at YMCA January 31st & February 28th
Family fun night has been planned for January 31st and February 28th from 6-8:30 pm at the Forest City YMCA. This free family event will provide you and your family with some quality time to spend together with use of the YMCA. Your family can enjoy swimming, basketball, wallyball, rec room and free pizza with drink. This event is made possible through donations and support from the Winnebago County businesses, Winnebago County Extension council and the YMCA. Space is limited for this family event please call to register the Thursday before each evening at 641-584-2261 or email your reservation to xwinnebago@iastate.edu.

Understand and Make a Smart Choice about Health Insurance
Free online educational workshop
Monday, January 19 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm (Participate from your own computer) Register at http://tinyurl.com/pvmceb7
This workshop will help you:
- Understand key health insurance concepts and terms
- Learn to identify your health insurance needs and priorities
- Examine the pros and cons of three hypothetical insurance plans.

QUESTIONS?? Call Brenda Schmitt, ISUEO Family Finance Specialist 641-512-0650 schmitt@iastate.edu

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.