



Ugh, I'm not feeling so hot. But I can't get sick, I have a game this week!

# MYTH BUSTER

Going outside with wet hair in the winter can make me sick.

**Truth is** the elements don't make you ill. Viruses do. However, a winter's chill may have a hand in lowering your defenses. The cold air can suppress your immune system, says Dr. Cindy Haines, board certified family physician and author of *The New Prescriptions*.

**Bottom line:** If you dash out the door with wet head, make sure you've bundled up! —D.K.

## the cold WAR

**Germs, germs everywhere. Don't let the cold or flu keep you from your best season yet!**

**It's starts with a sneeze.** Then a cough. Followed by a sore throat. Suddenly you're on the bench going through an entire box of Kleenex while your teammates are out there having fun. No fair, right? We say fair game. That's what you are to the cold-and-flu-causing particles floating all around you. The germiest surfaces in high schools are usually cafeteria tables, water fountains and bathroom paper towel handles, says Dr. Charles Gerba, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona. Your iPhone may also be a safe haven for bacteria—unless you clean it a few times a week with disinfectant wipes, like Clorox (most of us don't).

To stay healthy throughout the sneezin' season, you need to take a few precautionary measures, such as washing your hands often. We know your mom's been preaching this for years, but she has a point: Up to 80 percent of infections are transmitted through your palms and fingers, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Scrub your paws with soap and water for 25 seconds (aim to work up more foam than a latte-brewing barista). When a faucet isn't handy, consider this pocket-sized solution: an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Look for products with an alcohol content above 60 percent (the min amount needed to kill bacteria and viruses), **like Purell Instant Hand Sanitizer** (\$3.99, drugstore.com).

If you're already feeling under the weather, don't sideline yourself just yet. Follow the neck rule: "If you have symptoms above the neck, like head congestion, a scratchy throat, or congested ears, you can still play," says Dr. Susan Joy, director of women's sports health at the Cleveland Clinic Sports Health Center and head team physician for Cleveland State University. Exercise opens your nasal passages, temporarily relieving congestion and boosting endorphins (feel-good hormones). But don't push it. Your body needs about two weeks to completely flush a virus from its system.

If you're experiencing below-the-neck symptoms, like a fever or body aches, however, you'll need to take it easy. "Those symptoms could indicate you have something more serious, like the flu or mono," she says. If you're coughing, have a runny nose or an upset stomach, you may be losing more water than normal, which is why docs always tell you to "drink plenty of fluids." Avoid caffeinated drinks since they'll dehydrate you. Vitamin C-rich orange juice helps, but don't chug it like it's water. OJ contains as much sugar as a can of soda. We prefer a warm cup of decaf tea with honey to help loosen up mucus. —DIANA KELLY

93%

of shoes that have been worn for three months have fecal bacteria (aka, poo) on the soles. No wonder mom tells you to leave your shoes at the front door!

