



## **THE COMMON COLD IS BACK!!!**

As we attempted to fend off COVID-19 by masking, washing our hands and social distancing, we also largely fended off the common cold. There simply weren't as many opportunities for us to get sick when families weren't socializing as much, travel was limited, large gatherings were restricted, and many people worked from home.

Of course, some people still got a cold during the pandemic, but in general, respiratory illnesses were down. The CDC reported that cases for the flu were also unusually low. As we now ease off these strict precautions, colds seem to be here again along with other common viruses like bronchitis, flu, pneumonia and sore throat/strep.

Because we haven't been exposed to as many germs, have our immune systems been weakened? Betsy Varghese, M.D., Director Education and Volunteer Department at JPA, explains that's not the case. "Encountering germs in the environment can trigger an immune response in our bodies, but that alone doesn't "strengthen" our immune system. The pandemic may have decreased our contact with germs but that has not weakened our ability to respond to the germs in the future. Our immune system "remembers" germs and is able to make antibodies to attack the trespassing germ."

Unfortunately, there is no cure for the common cold. Over 200 viruses can cause the common cold but most commonly, it is caused by a group of rhinoviruses. There are no antiviral medications that can fight those viruses and antibiotics are only used to treat infections caused by bacteria.

Should you manage to get a cold, here are some things you can do to get you through it: stay home if you can, drink lots of warm fluids, sleep, use saline nasal drops/sprays, gargle with saltwater to ease a sore throat, add moisture to the air, eat good food including veggies, herbs and spices, use over-the-counter medications to ease the cold symptoms and get lots of rest.

Of course, we would prefer NOT to catch a cold – they can be very unpleasant. So, take care when you touch common surfaces, wash your hands frequently and you can still wear a mask to protect you and others from germs when you're in crowded areas and – get your Covid and Flu Vaccines.