

**REVIEWED**

Coronavirus COVID-19

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Sick with a cold, the flu or COVID-19? Make sure to have these essentials at home to help with recovery

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Published 8:29 a.m. ET Oct. 12, 2022 | Updated 6:31 p.m. ET Dec. 12, 2022

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December marks the peak of flu season and we're in for a rough one this year, as flu hospitalizations are the highest they've been for the month in 10 years. Winter also marks the season for the common cold, which lasts through spring. If that wasn't bad enough, COVID-19 continues to pose a problem, with hospitalizations climbing among older people and those with pre-existing health conditions.

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COVID-19 and the flu can sicken both children and adults. The most effective prevention method is staying up to date on your vaccines, which are available for both the flu and COVID-19. That said, sickness can still creep up on you even when vaccinated.

Fortunately, there are ways to make your recovery period, while not quite “fun”, at least more tolerable. Before you get sick, get prepared by having these essentials at home to help quicken recovery and make it more comfortable. Whatever ailments cross your path this year, here are some products you'll want to consider having on hand.

Symptoms of COVID-19, the flu and the common cold

Symptoms of COVID-19, the flu and the common cold can often overlap, making it hard to discern which ailment you may have. Consult your medical provider to figure out the best

plan for treating your symptoms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), monitoring the following symptoms of common ailments may help you to better determine your illness and needs.

COVID-19

- Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea

Flu

- Fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, potentially vomiting or diarrhea

Common cold

- Sneezing, stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, coughing, mucus dripping down your throat (post-nasal drip), watery eyes, fever

► **Getting a booster shot?** Here are 10 products that may help ease discomfort

1. A thermometer to monitor your fever

During cold and flu season, it can be hard to gauge how sick you really are—or what you have. A thermometer can help you there. The Vicks SpeedRead is a solid oral thermometer that's easily washable and simple to use. If you prefer a no-touch thermometer, consider using this one offered by Fenometer, which is highly rated since it delivers accurate results in an instant.

\$10 from Walmart

\$16 from Amazon

2. A humidifier to help ease your symptoms

Cold, dry weather and blustery winds as the weather gets cold can suck all the moisture from your skin, lips and sinuses. To combat these unpleasant symptoms, a quality warm mist humidifier like the LEVOIT humidifier, which we found to be the best on the market, can

bring great relief. This humidifier can help return moisture to your home, and in the process, soothe sore throats and dry noses. When it comes to COVID-19, the CDC specifically recommends humidifiers to ease symptoms.

\$90 from Amazon

3. An electric kettle to brew soothing tea

When you're sick, a hot cup of chamomile tea can go a long way. In order to brew it up quickly so you can get back under the covers, you'll need an efficient electric kettle. The PerfectTemp by Cuisinart is our absolute favorite and has the fastest boiling time out of all the models we tested. If you're trying to live a more frugal lifestyle, you can opt for our budget pick, Hamilton Beach's Electric Tea Kettle. It's less expensive but still performs like a high-end electric kettle.

\$99.95 from Amazon

\$40 from Amazon

4. An air purifier to clean the air in your home

While an air purifier alone is not enough to protect you or others from COVID-19, when used in combination with other CDC-recommended safety measures, air filtration can be used as an extra part of the plan to reduce transmission. Plus, air purifiers can remove particles and pollutants that can trigger allergy symptoms or lead to negative long-term health effects, making them a great investment for the home. The Blueair DustMagnet 5410i is the best air purifier we've ever tested for its quiet volume, excellent particle removal, Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa integration.

\$200 from Amazon

5. N95 or KN95 masks to protect others in your household

If you're sick with the flu or COVID-19 but members of your household aren't, be sure to wear a mask around them to prevent the spread. Experts suggest using N95 or KN95 masks to help protect you and others around you from contagious variants. Right now, masks are easy to find on online sites and at major retailers, so it's a good time to stock up on a pack.

\$12 from Bonafide Masks

6. A pulse oximeter to monitor COVID symptoms

To help monitor COVID-19 symptoms for yourself or a family member, you may consider getting a pulse oximeter. These medical devices attach to the finger to measure oxygen saturation in the blood, which experts believe can be a gauge for reduced lung capacity, a common symptom of the coronavirus. Oxygen saturation below 90 percent is considered hypoxic, meaning there is a lower level of oxygen than is needed in the blood and may require medical attention. Though it's not necessary for everyone, it can help give you peace of mind.

\$23 from Amazon

7. An at-home test to determine or rule out a COVID-19 infection

Symptoms of the flu, the common cold and COVID-19 can often overlap. If you're feeling sick, it's a good idea to get tested for COVID-19. At-home COVID-19 tests are a convenient way to get tested and can give you results in as little as 15 minutes. It's important to make sure you have at-home test kits before you get sick so that they're accessible when you need them.

\$19.88 from Walmart

\$24 from CVS

8. A cozy comforter to help you rest

Sometimes the only thing you can do to fight off illness is to get lots of rest and drink plenty of fluids—A.K.A. spending a lot of time in bed. If you want your bed to be extra comfortable and cozy, this LinenSpa comforter should do the trick. It's our favorite comforter we've ever tested because it's ultra-soft, affordable and doesn't stain easily.

\$35 from Amazon

9. A water bottle to keep you hydrated

Staying hydrated is key when you come down with an illness. Drinking water helps flush toxins through your system and makes you feel better if you're losing liquids or feeling dehydrated. A water bottle can help keep the liquids flowing. This Brita water bottle is the best we've ever tested because it's inexpensive, lightweight and comes equipped with a filter

for premium taste and straw perfect for using when you're sick and don't feel like moving a muscle. Plus, the stainless steel keeps your water cold for 24 hours straight. Not too shabby.

\$30 from Amazon

10. A blender to make a nutritious smoothie

Along with all the other annoying flu symptoms, loss of appetite can drain your energy and make you feel even worse. While you may not be able to stomach eating some soup or crackers, a simple smoothie can be easy to keep down and give you the nutrients and vitamins you need to start feeling better. We recommend the Black + Decker BL2010BG 10-Speed Blender, our budget pick for the best affordable blender. We love it because it's compact and blends all the ingredients you could want smoothly.

\$27 from Walmart

11. A way to block out distracting noises when you sleep

One of the worst things when you're sick (or perfectly healthy, to be honest) is not being able to fall asleep. There always seems to be something distracting happening around you like the sound of your own runny nose, so it's good to have some earplugs lying around. The Hearos Xtreme are the best pair of earplugs we've tried, as they strike the perfect balance between blocking sound while still being ultra-comfortable. If you don't love having earplugs in your ears, a sound machine can block out distracting noises for a peaceful sleep. The best we've tested is Adaptive Sound Sound + Sleep which completely blocked all sounds during our tests and adjusts itself automatically.

\$9 from Amazon

\$99 from Amazon

12. A box of tissues handy to ease the sniffles

The only thing worse than having the sniffles is using harsh toilet paper to blow your nose when you inevitably run out of tissues. If you don't want to run to the store (or can't because you don't want to expose others to germs), we recommend stocking up on Puffs Ultra Soft tissues, our favorite tissues because of how soft yet durable they are.

\$20 from Amazon

13. A juicer to help you get your daily dose of fruits and veggies

People say that orange juice is good for you when you're sick (or maybe it was just Grandma, but that's neither here nor there). Sometimes that old carton of Tropicana just won't cut it. For a homemade version, the Omega J8006HDS will churn out high yields of some of the freshest juice you'll ever taste, which is why we named it the best juicer of 2022. While it's on the more expensive side, you'll be able to use it outside of sickness for breakfasts, brunches and more.

Omega also offers a more affordable option, the H3000D Cold Press 365, which is our budget pick for the best juicer. We love it because it's quiet, compact and simple to operate.

\$311 from Amazon

\$70 from Amazon

14. A pressure cooker to make fast, hearty meals

A little chicken soup is always the best medicine. A pressure cooker makes it easy to throw all the ingredients into a pot and hop back in bed. Best of all, it'll be done before you know it. The Chef IQ Smart Cooker is our favorite affordable pressure cooker, as we loved its built-in weighing function and its customizable settings. For a more robust (but more expensive) option, we dubbed the Ninja Foodi OL701 the absolute best because it's a jack of all trades with 16 different cooking functions.

\$137 from Amazon

\$250 from Amazon

15. An eye mask to catch some Z's during the day

If you want to beat your sickness, getting some shut-eye during the day will be one of the best remedies. You may find yourself needing to sleep during the day and sunlight can make it incredibly hard to take a nap. This is where the Mzoo sleep mask comes in handy. We found it to be the best sleep mask because its comfortable fabric and shape mean that your eyes aren't uncomfortably pressed against the mask. Its adjustable straps mean that it will stay on as long as you need.

\$16 from Amazon

16. An Epsom salt bath to soothe your body

Warm baths and Epsom salts aren't just for when you want to treat yourself—they're both great for soothing a sore and tired body. Epsom salts can help alleviate stress and promote sleep, potentially giving you a better night's sleep after a day of fighting off an illness. They've also been shown to boost athletic performance, leading some to believe that Epsom salts can help facilitate muscle recovery as well. Reviewers rave over Dr. Teal's Epsom Salt Bath Soaking Solution—with a 4.8 rating on Amazon, these soothing salts can help you relax and assist you on your road to recovery.

\$19 from Amazon

17. A slow cooker to set-it-and-forget-it

Nobody has time to cook a full-blown meal when they're under the weather, so a kitchen gadget that allows you to set it and forget it while you take a nap is more than ideal. If you feel like splurging, our number one pick for slow cookers is the 3-in-1 multi-cooker by Cuisinart that offers great performance and optimal temperature control. For a more affordable option, you can't go wrong with the Hamilton Beach Set and Forget Slow Cooker which always cooks your food to perfection.

\$159.95 from Amazon

\$107.37 from Walmart

18. A space heater to keep you nice and toasty

Cold nights while you're sick can be especially brutal. If you don't want to jack up your thermostat and gas bill, a space heater can help solve your drafty woes when used safely. This one by De'Longhi is our favorite space heater we tested because it was the fastest at making rooms super toasty, and was incredibly easy to lift and transport. For a budget option, we recommend this one from Lasko because while it doesn't have as much versatility as our top pick, it still gets the job done.

\$100 from Amazon

\$36.44 from Walmart

19. An essential oil diffuser for relaxation and healing

Having a stuffed-up nose means you can't smell very much of anything, but a diffuser may be able to help with that. Not only do they add some extra moisture to your room, but depending on the oil you choose, such as eucalyptus and lavender, they may help clear your sinuses or make it easier to fall asleep. The Saje Aroma Om is the best essential oil diffuser we tested because it has a cool design, it's made with high-quality materials and it's easy to use.

\$98 from Saje Wellness

20. A heating pad to manage pain

There's something magical about heating pads that can mitigate just about any pain in your body, all while keeping you cozy and warm. Just place it wherever is aching and let it go to work. For an electric one, the best we ever tested is the BodyMed Digital Moist Heating Pad. It heats fast, maintains a steady high temperature and is easy to use. For an old-fashioned microwaveable one, we prefer this one by Caylee's Creations. It's soft, machine-washable and doubles as a cold compress when you freeze it. Plus, it's less expensive than an electric one.

\$52.49 from Amazon

\$23 from Amazon

21. A weighted blanket to de-stress and stay warm

Weighted blankets provide a calming effect with their gentle pressure and overall coziness. And I, for one, need calmness when I'm sick because I'm a hot mess. The super-popular Gravity Blanket ranks as the best weighted blanket we've tested because it provides the perfect amount of pressure, it's easy to clean and will last you for years to come. It doesn't come cheap, so as a budget option we also love the YnM Weighted Blanket because it's cozy and well-constructed for a fraction of the price.

\$250 from Gravity

\$50 from Amazon

22. A bottle of hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of germs

Repeat after me: wash your hands. Many people sneeze or cough onto surfaces that other people then touch, and then touch their own faces before washing them, spreading many

germs. To prevent that from happening, you can use soap and water for 20 seconds, or you can use hand sanitizer to kill germs if you're in a pickle. Despite a shortage once upon a time, you can now find some readily available online.

\$35 from Amazon

23. A case of disinfecting wipes to rid surfaces of germs

While COVID-19 is top of mind for many, disinfecting wipes can also eliminate other viruses, bacteria and allergens from surfaces around your home. No matter if it's the flu, a cold or COVID-19, wiping down high-touch surfaces around the home can help to prevent the spreading of germs to other household members. Be sure to properly wipe down surfaces like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks.

\$4.16 from Amazon

24. A hand cream to soothe dry skin

The dryness of winter can do a number on your skin, especially in conjunction with the constant use of hand sanitizer. Keep a hand cream on your bedside table to apply in the mornings, evenings or whenever deemed necessary by your dry hands. We've tested plenty of hand creams and found Kiehl's Ultimate Strength Hand Salve to be the best overall choice for an ultra-moisturizing and quick-absorbing lotion that'll keep your hands feeling soft and hydrated well throughout the day.

\$24 from Amazon

25. An electric blanket to keep you cozy when the chills hit

For when you're feeling any chills, a heated electric blanket is a must-have—and can be used throughout the colder months of the year even when you're not sick. Sunbeam Velvet Plush Cozy Feet Heated Blanket won our vote for the best electric blanket thanks to its soft material, consistent heat output and convenient foot pocket.

\$120 from Amazon

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