

Is Your Office Making You Sick?

With winter in the air, staying healthy and avoiding germs at work becomes paramount

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, 3 July 2018 – Most people spend the majority of their day inside during office hours, sitting in close quarters to their colleagues. With such proximity and lengthy time spent in the same place, germs and infections are bound to spread from person to person. Winter seems to make this a little more common and a study conducted in 2015 found that there's a shift in our DNA during winter that pumps up the levels of genes linked with inflammation, which triggers the symptoms of swelling and discomfort that we feel as our bodies fight to protect us from colds and flu.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some ways to keep office workers from getting ill is good ventilation. Sick Building Syndrome is a term coined by the World Health Organisation in 1986 and referred to a condition affecting office workers that had no defined source but was marked by headaches and respiratory problems.ⁱⁱⁱ While poor ventilation has been seen as one of the major factors in making people ill at the office, innovative technology in air conditioning systems has greatly helped in eradicating this syndrome.^{iv}

Robert Larkan, Head of Digital Air Solutions at Samsung South Africa says, "By choosing a Samsung air conditioner with an easy filter that captures dust, dangerous contaminants and allergens* and a Virus Doctor that reduces certain harmful viruses and bacteria**, it can contribute to your health and wellbeing this winter."^v

Once the air conditioning is sorted out, there are other actions office workers can take to ensure they don't catch the latest bug from colleagues. One of the most important aspects of keeping healthy is good hydration.^{vi} This means drinking an adequate amount of water every day. Keeping a water bottle on your desk is a good reminder to keep drinking. Limiting caffeine is another wise choice – caffeine can cause your body to dehydrate as well as trigger energy spikes and then crashes, which could negatively impact your body's immune system.^{vii} Eating regular, nutritious snacks throughout the day will keep energy levels balanced.

Of course, good hygiene is important for keeping germs at bay – ensure hands are washed before and after meals and bathroom breaks, as well as after interaction with a person who is ill. It's not just washing hands that's important, keeping regularly used devices clean will help to reduce the amount of exposure to germs.

“There are many ways in which people can keep themselves safeguarded from germs this winter, but we believe that a balanced interior temperature has a big impact. Moving from the cold outdoors to a too-warm interior environment isn’t a good idea and Samsung air conditioners incorporate sophisticated temperature controls to ensure this balance is perfect, no matter what the season,” adds Larkan.

If you are ill, the best option for yourself and your colleagues is to take the time to heal, away from the office. With digital technology, there are numerous ways in which office workers can still keep in touch and on top of work-loads remotely, so there’s no good reason to be in the office if you’re ill. Taking the time to heal will assist in keeping stress levels down, which is another highly important aspect of keeping your body healthy.

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ⁱ <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/why-you-get-sick-in-winter-2015-10#qTVG1CdPCxl29uCx.99>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms8000>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sick_building_syndrome

^{iv} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2796751/>

^v <http://www.samsung.com/za/air-conditioners/wall-mount-arxxmsfhgw/AR24MSFHGWKNFA/>

^{vi} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2908954/>

^{vii} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2257922/>

* Tested in Korea test lab (FITI/KEMTI) and Japan test lab (ITEA). Data has been measured under specific testing conditions and results may vary based on environmental factors.

** Tested in Kitasato Environmental Science Center (Japan)