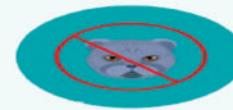


STATETIMES

SUNDAY

Your Companion for a Funday

 PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COVID-19



COVID, flu, pollution: Steps to protect your lungs from viruses and air pollutants

The spread of respiratory viruses is much more prevalent during the winter months. There is an increasing rise in the cases of cold, flu and allergies and with COVID-19 still amidst us, it is extremely important to take proper precautions. Furthermore, the poor air quality only takes an additional toll on our lungs and respiratory health. So what should you do? Following are some of the things you can do to protect yourself from viruses and harmful air pollutants.

Know your symptoms

Be it COVID, flu or cold, almost all respiratory infections cause lung distress. When it comes to COVID-19, some of the most common ailments include mild fever, cough, sore throat, headache, fatigue, body aches and pain and more. People with flu infection or a common cold may also experience the same symptoms. While the severity may vary, the health challenges often remain the same.

If you're particularly suffering from nasal congestion, cough and throat irritation, apart from cold, COVID or flu, it can also be due to the pollution. Major cities in India are currently struggling with declining air quality. This has resulted in wheezing, difficulty breathing, irritation and inflammation of the respiratory tract, shortness of breath and eye irritation.

Masking is key

One of the best ways to protect yourself from contagious viruses and harmful air pollutants is by wearing a proper, well-fitting mask. Covering your mouth and nose with a mask is said to offer a considerable amount of protection from not just fast-spreading infections, but also from the pollution.

Avoid outdoor activities and visiting crowded places

Given the rising number of respiratory infections and in light of the poor air quality, it is best to avoid going outside, visiting crowded places and indulging in outdoor activities. Currently, the best way to avoid contracting infections and getting affected by the pollution is by staying indoors.



Those who are vulnerable i.e. older adults, those with pre-existing health conditions and immunocompromised people should take extra precaution in order to safeguard their health. Furthermore, people with asthma, COPD, bronchitis and severe respiratory illnesses should limit outdoor exercises in case of pollution and smog.

Eat lung-strengthening foods

Your lungs can benefit a lot from a nutritious, well-balanced diet. This means you should include foods that are rich in various nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

Foods that are processed, rich in refined carbs, oily and sugary are said to affect overall health, including our lungs. These only cause inflammation in the body and further strain the lungs. Instead, one should invest in foods and fruits that are high in fiber, anti-inflammatory properties and antioxidants. These include whole grains, berries, nuts and seeds, green, leafy vegetables and more.

Breathing exercises can help improve respiratory functions

Apart from taking precautionary measures, eating healthy foods and limiting unhealthy habits like smoking, drinking alcohol, you can also perform breathing exercises to strengthen your lungs.

You can indulge in diaphragmatic or belly breathing that engages your diaphragm. You can start by relaxing your shoulders and sitting back. Place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Breathe in through your nose and breathe out through pursed lips while pressing on your abdomen.

Follow proper hand hygiene

It is extremely important that you also maintain and follow proper hand hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water after you come in contact with a frequently touched or contaminated surface. Viruses and germs have a tendency to linger on surfaces and can get passed on from person to person, making them sick. So after touching a surface, washing your hands or sanitizing them before touching your face is crucial.

Raising an independent child: How to involve kids in household chores?



How many times have you, as a child, followed your Mum or Grand mum into the kitchen and tried your hand at some cooking? Many times, right! It isn't difficult to bring kids into the kitchen or do household chores because, unlike any other space in the house, a kitchen is a breeding ground of harmless as well as harmful activities that a child can indulge in. Of course, we aren't talking about the harmful part here, just what is suitable for a child to do without getting hurt! However, it is easier said than done. "Though involving children in kitchen duties, apart from other household work, is known to instill in them some really valuable life skills, the training also comes in handy in their later years, when they might be living away from home. Besides, it also builds self-esteem among children," says Sonal Jindal, parenting expert, Founder, Medusa Exim. However, bringing in older kids, who are suitably equipped to handle kitchen responsibilities, can be a mean task because children are, often, hard-wired to not do exactly what they are told. So, how do you involve your children in the kitchen? Here are some ways in which parents can encourage children to work in kitchen and reap the benefits later on –

Recipe reading

This could be a good way to prepare kids for kitchen duty. And you would get a willing assistant who would refer to the recipe, while you do the preparation and cooking. Bonus points – your child would brush up on his or her reading skills too and gain knowledge about various ingredients.

Basic chopping/mixing

We aren't talking about sharp knives, but there are a lot of food ingredients that can be cut, chopped, or mixed with the help of a basic table knife. Preparing bananas, cutting butter into smaller cubes, dicing boiled veggies, all this preparation can be handed over to the young ones. Kids can also be employed to wash/rinse fruits and vegetables.

Measurements

Scooping out flour, measuring chocolate chips, or pouring wet ingredients can be a fun way to introduce your child to kitchen responsibilities. You can invest in good quality measuring equipment to make the process easier and more attractive.

Assembling Food

If you ask a child to prepare a sandwich, chances are they won't say no! The reason – assembling food gives them a sense of authority without putting them in way of danger like handling fire or sharp knives. So, prepare all the toppings beforehand, and put your son or daughter to work making their own pizzas, wraps, tacos, etc. You can finish off the dish as required.

Handling Food Processor

Apart from safe mixing, chopping, and washing, toddlers would love to press the buttons on your food processor, while you keep the lid on. This step will also help teach them kitchen safety tips. Kitchen work need not be stressful for you, especially if you can involve your children to work with you. The move would not only help them be life-ready but will also help you bond better with them.

Smart ways to manage pet expenses



The definition of pet ownership has changed over time. Today, pets are important family members, and people want quality products and services for them. However, what often goes unnoticed is that daily pet-keeping costs, along with emergency and regular pet care, can disrupt your budget, and expenses can surge significantly.

As much as we adore our furry friends, the fact is that pet care comes at a price. According to industry estimates, the Indian pet care services market is valued at \$1.2 billion, with 60% of expenditure coming from products alone. Pet parents in India spend approximately Rs. 4,000 monthly on pet care. However, with a few strategic decisions and simple tips, you can smartly manage your pet expenses, save money and give them quality care. Here's how:

DIY is the way to be

Bid goodbye to fancy brand marketing ads and deals for pet necessities. Today, with the power of the internet, you can search for easy, workable DIY hacks and manage basic pet requirements at home. For example, you can flip over an old table and refurbish it into a pet bed. In fact, you can easily prepare simple pet treats at home with the help of online recipes.

Shopping sprees for pets

Certain items cannot be managed at home and must be purchased from stores. In such cases, limiting your shopping sprees and purchasing wisely can help you manage your pet expenses. Try the conventional route. Make a list of all the pet supplies beforehand. Buy the products in bulk and store them for future use. Furthermore, avail the hefty discounts offered during the festive season for your pet purchases. This way, you can manage your finances better.

Be your pet's trainer and groomer

Professional services like pet training and grooming are other things that can be financially straining. You don't have to be guilty of ditching them. Along with being your pet's best friend, be his personal trainer and groomer. For this, you would have to understand your pet's specific requirements from the vet. They can recommend the best tools and techniques for

taking at-home care of your pet. For instance, simple hygienic practices like nail trimming, fur brushing, ear cleaning, etc. can be easily done at home. Try to manage as much as you can on your own.

Pet insurance to the rescue

Medical treatment of your pets is also costly. To ensure quality care and save this expense, always get pet insurance. Insurance coverage for pets is no longer a fad and has become a necessity. Select the policy wisely and invest in preventive pet care in the present so that you can save money in the long run.

However, you need to research thoroughly, connect with experts, and see which policy fits your budget and is beneficial for your furball. Make sure that you get a policy when your pet is young. Waiting for them to grow old or getting insurance after they have been diagnosed with a medical condition will either not provide you benefits or will disqualify your pet from insurance coverage.

Pet sitting with loved ones

We have all been in a fix when we needed to step out for work or other commitments and did not have anyone to take care of our pet. In such scenarios, we always opt for pet sitters. However, if you wish to save money on pet care, you need to cut back on such facilities.

Instead, request your family or friends to take care of your furry friend in your absence. Alternatively, you can also connect with your neighbours who have pets and form a pet-sitting club. This way, your furball will be in safe hands and you will be able to save efficiently.

Why it is important to consider the expenses

Taking care of pets and giving them quality services is essential. However, making mindful choices is equally important to avoid indulging in unnecessary expenditures like extravagant shopping to save money. Bulk shopping, availing discounts, taking care of pet grooming, and arranging supplies at home along with seeking assistance from loved ones for pet boarding are some of the cost-efficient ways. Furthermore, taking pet insurance when your pet is young is imperative as it will help you save a lot of money.

