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Traveling Business Class: The Swine Flu

I get asked pretty frequently (especially lately), “You travel all the time, what do you do about germs? Aren’t you afraid of the Swine Flu?” Well, I haven’t gone all “Howard Hughes” yet, but I did do one curious thing; I stopped listening to the news and I actually spoke to my doctor. Here’s a fact that surprised me, as of this morning (April 29th) a whopping 40 people out of 320 million in the U.S. have the Swine Flu, none have died, and only a few have even had any severe symptoms. My doctor told me that unless I’m headed for Mexico City, I have more to fear from the average hotel room or from my fellow airplane passengers than I do from a planet sweeping Swine Flu pandemic. So how badly should I really freak out?

My doctor says, “Don’t freak out too much, but do use some common sense.” He said that by far, the number one preventative for the spreading of nasty bacteria was to wash my hands! So, I do. I wash them all the time. I also use the hand sanitation goop and do you know what? I don’t get sick... I haven’t been sick more than one day in the past year of traveling.

Still, flu outbreaks do “up the ante” a little bit. I’ve compiled a list of recommendations from the World Health Organization that will help you do what you can to minimize your risk of infection. Personally, I have to recommend, hydration, vitamin C packets, and frequent hand-washing as personally endorsed remedies. Your mileage may vary:

- ❑ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Person to person transmission of a virus can result from touching another person, then absorbing the germs into yourself.
- ❑ Wash your hands frequently. Use warm water and soap and rub vigorously for at least 30 seconds.
- ❑ Keep hand sanitizers in your car or purse. Use after handling money, touching items that others also use (such as a gas pump), and before eating restaurant food.
- ❑ Eat a healthy diet. Eating foods rich in vitamins A, C, and E will strengthen your immune system. Try to start each day with a healthy breakfast.
- ❑ Take vitamins and supplements. A good multi-vitamin can help strengthen your immune system, as can drinking green tea.
- ❑ Drink at least eight glasses of water per day. Water flushes out your system and keeps you hydrated.
- ❑ Practice stress management. Too much stress can weaken your immune system. Exercise and find ways to relax, such as listening to soothing music, meditating, practicing yoga, reading, or watching a comedy show.
- ❑ Get plenty of rest. Adults need at least seven hours of sleep per night, children more. Insufficient rest increases your chances of getting sick.
- ❑ Use a separate set of towels for each family member. Give everyone a different color or pattern.
- ❑ Avoid party dips and food trays that do not contain utensils. Others may have touched the food with their hands and spread their germs to the surround bits of food. Snack bowls in bars are notorious germ collectors.
- ❑ Stop smoking. Smoking kills cilia — the fibers in your nose and lungs that prevent mucus from clogging these airways.