

# A hug a day may keep the sniffles away, new study suggests

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## ***Today:***

If you're worried about catching a cold, there's a simple act that may protect you against the virus and help you feel better right away: hug someone.

Hugging can help prevent a cold virus or lessen symptoms in people who are already sick, according to a recent study published in Psychological Science.

We're told to avoid sweaty, germmy handshakes during cold and flu season, but the warm embrace of a close friend or loved one may actually improve immune system functioning, says Sheldon Cohen, a professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University and lead author of the study.

Stress lowers the body's defenses against viruses and other pathogens, research has shown.

For the new study, Cohen and his colleagues rounded up 404 healthy adult volunteers, who were asked to fill out questionnaires to determine, among other things, whether and how often they'd been hugged during a two-week period and whether they'd experienced conflict or tension. Then the participants were deliberately exposed to the cold virus and immediately moved to quarantine for a week, while researchers monitored them for signs of infection and illness.

Read the whole story: [Today](#)