

Who needs a hug? Anyone trying to ward off a cold this winter.

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The Washington Post:

Do you need a hug?

If you're trying to ward off colds and the flu this winter — and who isn't? — the answer is yes, according to a study by Carnegie Mellon University researchers released Wednesday and scheduled for publication in the journal *Psychological Science*.

“The apparent protective effect of hugs may be attributable to the physical contact itself or to hugging being a behavioral indicator of support and intimacy,” Sheldon Cohen, a professor of psychology, and his team wrote. “Either way, those who receive more hugs are somewhat protected from infection and illness-related symptoms.”

Cohen's study was actually an attempt to determine how much protection social support provides against stress and the physical vulnerability it creates, in this case to colds and flu. As expected, the researchers found that people who perceive that they have strong social support networks enjoyed a degree of “buffering” against stress and those physical ailments. When they separated out hugging's role in that protection, they were able to assign it “32 percent of the attenuating effect of support.”

Read the whole story: [*The Washington Post*](#)