



Cold, be gone: How Europeans are approaching health prevention today

- Regular hand washing, maintaining minimum distance and mask wearing remain at top of European's minds to avoid infection
- Only 18 percent are more likely to call in sick from work when experiencing cold symptoms
- Immune support most common motivation (49 percent) for use of vitamin and mineral supplements (VMS)
- 1 in 4 rely on natural remedies to ward off colds, increased tendency in Eastern European countries

With cold season just around the corner, stuffy noses, sore throats and coughs are not far behind. In the past, we asked Europeans how they handle a cold in the workplace, which types of remedies they rely on and whether or not they let an infection affect their behaviour towards their partner. This time around, we chose to take a closer look at how the pandemic has shaped their approach to preventive health. Have they become more responsible in handling infections themselves? How do they react when they see others exhibiting symptoms of a cold? And what are their top strategies to avoid catching it?

Fear of judgement and mindfulness of others go a long way

Today, 49 percent of Europeans say they are more likely to keep away from someone exhibiting signs of infection, such as sneezing or coughing. Accordingly, 43 percent worry about being looked at funny by others when exhibiting symptoms of a cold. Women are much more likely to be impacted by this than men:

51 percent of them say they fear others might judge them when they cough or sneeze in public, compared with only 35 percent of men. This fear is particularly pronounced among Austrians (55 percent), the Portuguese (53 percent) and Serbians (52 percent). Germans (39 percent) and Spaniards (30 percent) on the other hand could care less what others think of their huffing and puffing.



With regard to being mindful of others, one in three Europeans are more likely to take their fellow people's health into consideration and let them know in advance if they are currently battling a cold. Another 30 percent feel increasingly uncomfortable at the idea of leaving home altogether when they are feeling sick. People in Italy are struggling especially hard in the face of this moral dilemma (42 percent). The question of whether or not to take time off work to fully recover from a cold is a dividing force among Europeans: While 18 percent say they could see themselves calling in sick more readily than in the past, 19 percent say they are less likely to do so going forward. The remaining 63 percent remain unfazed in the aftermath of the pandemic, stating they plan on taking sick days just as frequently (or infrequently) as before.

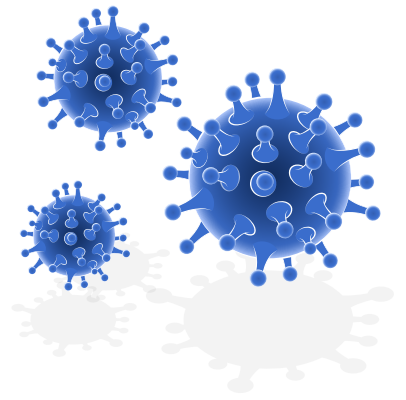
43 %

of Europeans are worried that others might look at them funny when they sneeze or cough in public.



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Proper hygiene and distance to be upheld

In terms of behaviours employed to ward off an infection, Europeans have a number of ideas up their sleeve – not least due to the then-mandatory guidelines implemented during the pandemic. It seems that programs like “hands, face, space” have borne fruit: regular and proper hand washing (46 percent) and use of hand disinfectants (43 percent) are some of the most popular tactics Europeans plan to stick with. And as less contact with others decreases the likelihood of infections of all kinds, over one in three also plan on maintaining a minimum distance to others and avoiding large gathering (36 percent each). In the Czech Republic, only one in four (26 percent) want to stay away from crowds, while people in the United Kingdom are far more cautious (47 percent). The continued use of face masks is non-negotiable for 30 percent of Europeans: Spain (52 percent), Portugal (44 percent) and Italy (41 percent) are among the countries where most people plan to keep them on.

VMS especially popular in Eastern European countries

About one in three Europeans (30 percent) consume VMS with the intention of avoiding an infection with the common cold. If taken regularly and in the recommended dosage, they can help support the body’s natural immune defence, thus decreasing the risk of infection – especially during the colder months. In fact, immune support (49 percent) is the most common reason Europeans take vitamin and mineral supplements (VMS), followed by the wish to increase overall energy levels and vitality (40 percent). Women (54 percent) are more likely to choose supplements in support of their immune system than men (44 percent). Overall, Eastern European countries are the most enthusiastic advocates for supplements, especially for immune support: in Serbia (69 percent), the Czech Republic (66 percent), Romania (64 percent), Poland (59 percent) and Kazakhstan (58 percent), the majority of the respective population regularly reach for VMS. In Germany and France (26 percent each), the Netherlands (24 percent), Belgium and the UK (23 percent each) and Austria (22 percent), people are less likely to turn to pills and powders to support their immune system. Merely one in five (18 percent) European adults do not take any type of dietary supplement. Herbal and natural remedies are the method of choice for just over one in four European adults (26 percent). Interestingly, the most avid users of such cures are found in Romania (45 percent) and Serbia (41 percent), despite their enthusiasm for VMS.

