

STAGE I NATIONAL STUDENTS OLYMPIAD IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Reading Comprehension Test for 8 Form Students

Can You Really Get A Cold From Going Outside With Wet Hair?

The question: Can I really catch a cold just from going outside with wet hair?

The answer: No doubt you've heard this one before -- probably from Mom or Grandma as you rushed out the door one winter morning fresh out of the shower.

But while you might not feel so cozy venturing out into the cold with a wet head, doing so doesn't make you ill. Colds and the flu are caused by viruses; the only way to come down with the bugs is to come into contact with those viruses that cause them.

"In order to get an infection you need to be exposed to an infectious agent," said Dr. Prithvi Tosh, an infectious diseases physician and researcher at the Mayo Clinic. "There are several things that go around in times of cold weather -- influenza, different cold viruses. That's what you need to get infected. Going out with wet hair is not going to cause an infection. I think it more so just makes people uncomfortable."

He cautioned that that doesn't mean it's a *good* idea to go traipsing around in below-freezing temperatures without a jacket or with a wet head. Ultra-cold weather is a stressor on the body, and in extreme cases could lead to hypothermia, which can certainly affect your immune system.

Of course, you *can* catch a cold or flu virus while outside, and cold and flu season *does* overlap with cold weather. Recent research suggests rhinoviruses, which cause the common cold, may thrive in low temperatures. But you won't get an infection simply *because* your hair is wet. Or because you didn't wear a jacket, or a scarf, or mittens, either.

"The things to really focus on are respiratory etiquette, meaning if you are sick to cough or sneeze into your elbow, and good hand hygiene," said Tosh, who admits this is a tough myth to finally put to rest. "No matter how many times I tell *my* mom that you can't get a cold from being in the cold, she still says this," he said. "And she knows I'm an infectious diseases physician!"

Task: Read the text and answer questions 1-10 with either True (T) or False (F).

1. Going outside with wet hair will only make you sick if you catch a virus at the same time.
2. Going outside with wet hair will cause hypothermia.
3. Having good hand hygiene refers to washing your hands often and well while sick.
4. Wearing a jacket, scarf and mittens can help prevent hypothermia.
5. Hypothermia can make you more likely to become sick.
6. Winter is the prime time to catch an influenza virus.
7. Rhinoviruses cause the influenza and the common cold.
8. The author's mother doesn't believe her son.
9. The common cold dies in hot temperatures.
10. Bodies are not good at managing extremely cold temperatures.

Task: Read the text and answer questions 11-15 with either A, B, C, or D.

11. The word "traipsing" most closely means:
 - a. Falling
 - b. Walking
 - c. Running
 - d. Exploring
12. Which of these does not stress your body out?
 - a. Extremely cold weather
 - b. Not wearing proper clothing
 - c. Not listening to your mother
 - d. Not using good hygiene
13. How can't viruses be spread?
 - a. Through a sneeze or cough
 - b. Through a poor immune system
 - c. Through not wearing a hat with wet hair
 - d. Through good hand hygiene
14. The author would most likely believe which statement?
 - a. Catching the flu is not very serious
 - b. You should always listen to your mother/grandmother's advice
 - c. Using common sense and science will help protect your health
 - d. Now that we have proof, the myth will finally stop
15. The most important facts about the author are that he is:
 - a. A Doctor of medicine and a researcher
 - b. A physician and laboratory scientist

- c. A physician and a son
- d. A son and a researcher

Adapted from:

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