

Staying Healthy Post-Pandemic (*Interview Transcripts*)

Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare

“Most people have not had colds. They have not had bronchitis. They have not had strep throat – or other simple, contagious infections. While they are simple, it is quite unpleasant when you get a bad cold. You can still get a fever, a sore throat – and they will share a lot of symptoms with COVID illness. We have noticed that last year there was essentially no flu season, no influenza last winter. That is most likely because people were wearing masks.” (:33)

Bill Walsh, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, OSF HealthCare

“We expect that there is going to be a rise possibly in influenza, but most certainly in a simple upper respiratory infection such as a cold or strep throat as people take the masks off. They have not been getting these illnesses over the past year, year and a half but they will likely increase now as people stop masking.” (:21)

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“I still think it’s a great idea to do the elbow bump or a little bow and smile with your eyes to greet somebody. It is OK not to shake people’s hands. You can wave at them from five or six feet away to say hi. That is a habit that has prevented all kinds of illnesses over the past year, year and a half.” (:21)

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“So what have we learned over the past year and a half as the pandemic raged throughout our city, our country, our world? We’ve learned that wearing masks and washing our hands and keeping our distance help to keep us safe and healthy. So moving forward as we navigate, hopefully, a post-pandemic world I think we all need to remember that whether it’s COVID or influenza or the common cold or strep throat – washing our hands, wearing a mask, and keeping our distance keeps us healthy.” (:34)