

Flu Prevention and Treatment Tips

Influenza, or the “flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can even be fatal. Older adults, young children, and people with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious flu complications, including bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot every year in the late summer or early fall, before flu season takes hold.

Stop the spread of all flu viruses with these simple precautions:

■ **Wash your hands**

often with soap and water – especially after you sneeze or cough, and before eating.

■ **Use an alcohol-based hand gel**

to clean your hands if you don't have access to soap and water.

■ **Cover your mouth**

and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in the garbage.

■ If you don't have a tissue, **cough or sneeze into the upper part of your sleeve.**

■ **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth.

■ **Try to avoid close contact**

with people who are coughing or otherwise appear sick

■ If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, you should **stay home** and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.

The following page has some basic steps that can help protect you against the flu, and help lower your risk of complications if you do get it.

What to Do if You Get the Flu

Call your healthcare provider

If you or someone you care for has a fever, chills, aches, a sore throat, cough, or other flu symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately. A healthcare provider can prescribe one of two antiviral drugs, oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®). These can help your body fight the flu and other viruses. These antiviral medications work differently than vaccines or antibiotics and need to be taken according to your healthcare provider's directions. They work best if taken early in the illness, so call your provider as soon as possible.

Stay home

If you think you might have the flu, stay home until it's been seven days since your symptoms began, or until you've been symptom-free for 24 hours. Doing this will keep you from spreading the virus further.

Get some much needed rest

To help your body fight the flu, get enough sleep and drink plenty of fluids. Juice, water, and soup are great ways to stay hydrated. But avoid caffeinated drinks, which won't hydrate you as well.

Make yourself as comfortable as possible

Because you might be cold one minute and hot the next, wear layers so you can easily add or remove clothes as needed.

Look out for Emergency Warning Signs

Call your healthcare provider or go to the emergency room immediately if you have any of these symptoms:

- High or prolonged fever (above 101-102°F or a fever lasting more than 3-5 days)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Near-fainting or fainting
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting and/or the inability to keep down food or water

Note: Anyone living alone should get help quickly, instead of waiting.

Follow advice from health officials

You can find up-to-date information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.