

Stay Healthy During Flu Season!

Flu is a contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and, in some cases, can lead to death. Flu viruses are spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing or by touching an object that has flu viruses on it and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Flu season runs from late fall through the winter months and generally peaks in February and March.

Symptoms of flu may come on quickly and include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches and stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Complications of flu may include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic conditions such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes.

How to Avoid the Flu

Flu shots are your best defense against the flu. It is best to get a flu shot as they become available for the coming flu season (usually in the fall), but you can still benefit from a flu shot later in the season. Check with your doctor before you get a flu shot to make sure it is right for you. Your doctor may recommend another approach, such as the use of certain antiviral medications.



Other prevention steps:

- **Maintain good health habits:** Get plenty of sleep, be as physically active as is appropriate for you, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritional foods.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water, scrubbing for about 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away immediately and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your shoulder or arm, then wash any affected skin immediately
- **Limit your contact** with persons who are ill. Avoid shaking hands if you are ill and with others who are ill.
- **Limit going out** and into crowds as much as possible during the flu season, or when flu cases are common in your community.



How to Care For Yourself When You Have the Flu

- **Stay home and rest** to fight the flu and avoid spreading it to others.
- **Drink plenty of liquids** to replace fluids lost through fever and sweating.
- **Take medication** for your symptoms. If you have a chronic health problem or are taking medication, get advice from your doctor or pharmacist about the best over-the-counter medications for you. Your doctor may want to prescribe antiviral drugs to lessen the length of the flu.
- **Wash your hands** often to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- **Let your case manager know** that you have the flu and if you need any additional services, such as a ride to the doctor or help getting food, liquids and medications. If you are moving to another location to receive care while you recover, let your case manager and service provider know where you are going and again when you are coming home.

2009 H1N1 Flu Pandemic

A flu pandemic occurs when a new virus develops that is not affected by available vaccines, causes strong symptoms and spreads far and quickly. The 2009 H1N1 flu strain (also called swine flu) reached pandemic status in 2009. The same healthy habits that help you limit the spread of seasonal flu and other types of respiratory viruses will help control the spread of 2009 H1N1 flu.

Generally, people age 65 and older are least likely to get sick with the 2009 H1N1 virus. Because there will be limited amounts of vaccine available, the first doses are recommended for those who are most likely to get infected, including young people, child caregivers, pregnant women and emergency personnel. Older adults are considered low priority for 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.

While H1N1 vaccine is not a priority for older adults, antiviral treatment is, because people age 65 and older are at higher risk for flu-related complications. If you experience flu-like symptoms, see your doctor as soon as possible.

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