

Protect Yourself From the Flu This Year!

Americans were hit hard by influenza last year.¹ The 2012-2013 flu season was one of the most intense on record, with the highest recorded rates of pneumonia and influenza diagnoses in nearly a decade.¹ Heading into the 2013-2014 flu season, it's important to take steps to protect yourself and your family from the flu.

A healthcare professional is the best source of information, but the tips below can get you started!

First and Foremost: Get Vaccinated!

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states the single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination.² It is recommended that everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine each year, as soon as they are available.² *Contrary to common misconceptions—the flu vaccine does not cause the flu!*³
- In addition to the shot, a nasal-spray flu vaccine option is available.² *The CDC's website (CDC.gov/flu/protect/vaccine) can help you understand which vaccination option is best for you or your family members.*
- Historically, seasonal flu vaccines were designed to protect against three influenza viruses that commonly circulate among people today: one strain of influenza B virus, as well as influenza A (H1N1) viruses and influenza A (H3N2) viruses. For the first time, in the 2013-2014 flu season, vaccines will be available (nasal-spray and shot) that work to protect against two strains of influenza A, and also two strains of influenza B.
- The inclusion of a fourth influenza strain allows these vaccines (known as quadrivalent influenza vaccines) to help provide protection against an additional influenza B strain that may circulate next season. *Talk to your healthcare provider about quadrivalent vaccine options!*

Other Easy Ways to Avoid the Flu

- **Wash your hands!** It is important to wash frequently, use soap and warm water, and wash as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.⁴
- **Avoid close contact with sick people.** Frequently disinfect shared items, such as phones, keyboards, and household surfaces.⁵
- **Make sure your hands are clean before you touch your face!** Flu often enters the body through the nose, mouth, and eyes, so it's important to only touch your face with freshly washed hands.⁵
- **Get adequate sleep and manage stress levels.** Not managing stress levels and lack of sleep can reduce immune functioning, and thus lower your body's ability to fend off viruses.⁵
- **Stay hydrated, exercise, and eat healthy.** Keeping with this routine will strengthen the immune system and the body's ability to fight infections.⁵

Be Respectful: Don't Spread the Flu

- **Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing.** Throw tissues and other disposable items used by people with flu-like symptoms in the trash.⁵
- **Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.**⁶ Most healthy adults can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.⁷
- **Keep your child home from school!** The CDC recommends that you keep your child home from school or daycare for at least 24 hours after his or her fever is gone. The CDC defines a fever as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.⁴

To learn more about how to protect yourself and your family against the flu, please visit:
www.facebook.com/dontwaitvaccinate or www.cdc.gov/flu/.

References

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