



Preventing and Treating Flu

Why is it important to prevent flu?

Each year, many people become sick with the flu. While the flu may seem like it is not a major illness, it can lead to more serious complications including pneumonia in some people. It is important to prevent flu, to keep it from spreading, and to treat it the right way if it occurs.

Who should get a flu vaccine?

Children under the age of 5, anyone over 50, anyone with a chronic disease, especially asthma, emphysema or other lung disease, and anyone with a disease that decreases their resistance to infections may need a flu shot. Discuss this with your doctor or health care provider.

What is the difference between the flu vaccine and an antiviral drug?

Flu vaccines are given to prevent disease before it happens. The flu vaccine comes in a shot or a nasal-spray form. Both are made from a virus that does not cause infection. Instead, it helps prepare the body to fight or to prevent infection later on.

Antivirals are drugs that help prevent viral infections in people who were exposed. They may also be used to treat people who have the flu. When given to treat people who have the flu, antiviral drugs may limit how sick they get. Keep in mind though, that antivirals are not a substitute for a vaccine, if it is available.



Will antibiotics help treat the flu?

No, antibiotics are not used to treat the flu. Antibiotics are used to treat infections caused by bacteria (like the bacteria that cause strep throat), but they are not effective in treating infections caused by viruses like the flu. Antibiotics may be needed to treat complications from the flu such as pneumonia or bronchitis.

Does the current flu shot protect me from pandemic flu?

No, but it is still important to get a flu shot to protect yourself and others against seasonal flu. The reason the current flu shot will not protect against pandemic flu is because each type of flu needs a special vaccine. That is why we have to get a new flu shot every year because each year, the virus that causes the flu is different. If there is a flu pandemic, the flu vaccine will only be given to people who are not already sick.

What are some differences between seasonal and pandemic flu?

You might know a lot about seasonal flu, but pandemic flu is different in the following ways:

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Follows a pattern, usually happening every winter	Happens rarely, no matter the season and spreads quickly through the world
The population usually has some immunity	The population has little or no immunity
Some people get sick	Many people get sick
The healthcare system can take care of the sick	The healthcare system may be overwhelmed by the sick
Smaller effect on society	Large effect on society since many people will be sick and important services will be disrupted

What can we do to protect ourselves?

To protect yourself and your family, try to

- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Stay away from people who are sick
- Stay home if you are sick



To learn more:

- To find a flu clinic, visit <http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.aspx?c=aqKGLXOAIH&b=1015035>
- For more on seasonal flu, please visit the Center for disease Control and Prevention's Flu website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- For more on pandemic flu, please visit the Pandemic Flu website at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/index.html>



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