

CDC Says “Take 3” Actions to Fight the Flu



Flu is a serious contagious disease. Each year in the United States, on average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die from seasonal flu complications. The following article, excerpted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), provides actions you can take to protect yourself and others from influenza (the flu).

1. Take time to get a flu vaccine.

- CDC recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal influenza.
- While there are many different flu viruses, the seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three seasonal viruses that research suggests will be most common.
- Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of serious flu complications, including young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.
- Seasonal flu vaccine is also important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from making them sick.

2. Take everyday preventive actions.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, the CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other measures to keep your distance from others to lessen the spread of flu.

3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them.

If you get seasonal flu, antiviral drugs can treat it.

- Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body.
- It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat people who are very sick (hospitalized) or people who are sick with flu-like symptoms and who are at increased risk of serious flu complications, such as pregnant women, young children, people 65 and older and people with chronic health conditions. (Most people have been able to recover at home from seasonal flu without needing medical care.)
- Antiviral drugs are not sold over-the-counter and are different from antibiotics. They can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.
- For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started within the first two days of symptoms.
- Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People who may be infected with the flu may also have respiratory symptoms without a fever.
- Visit the CDC's website to find out what to do if you get sick with the flu and how to care for someone at home who is sick with the flu.

Information excerpted from "CDC Says 'Take 3' Actions to Fight the Flu" and "Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs," www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm.