

Get Ready For Flu Season

It's the time of year when you need to start thinking about your flu vaccine. The Center for Disease Control recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older. So if you're reading this article that means you! I know, I know, you really don't want to think about getting a shot right now. But September is the best time to plan because flu season is right around the corner.

What Is The Flu?

Seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. Flu viruses are constantly changing so it's not unusual for new flu virus strains to appear each year. Flu season usually begins when cold weather appears. Why? There's no apparent reason. It's simply a characteristic of the flu and the timing of the seasons. Seasonal flu activity usually peaks in January or February.

How Does Seasonal Flu Spread?

Most experts believe that you get the flu when a person with the flu coughs, sneezes, or talks and droplets containing their germs land in your mouth or nose. You can also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.

Some groups are more likely to experience complications from the seasonal flu including those over the age of 65. As you age, your immune system weakens. This weakening makes you more susceptible to the flu. For seniors, the seasonal flu can be very serious. More than half of flu-related hospitalizations occur in people age 65 and older. Some flu complications include bacterial pneumonia, ear or sinus infections, dehydration and the worsening of chronic health conditions.

Get Prepared

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. First, schedule an appointment with your doctor to get your flu vaccination. If you haven't had a physical this year, take the opportunity to schedule your physical AND your flu vaccination. Good health habits are important. Here are a few steps you can take to prevent illness:

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
2. When you're sick, stay home from work, school or errands.
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze.
4. Wash your hands often to protect you from germs.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work and school.
7. Get plenty of rest.
8. Eat nutritious food and get some physical activity every day.

What If You Do Get the Flu?

Flu symptoms can be mild or severe, and can come on suddenly – be sure you know your treatment options so you can be prepared. Symptoms generally appear 1 to 4 days after exposure

to the virus. Symptoms include chills, fever, aches including headaches, cough, runny nose and tiredness.

If you do get sick, there are drugs that can treat flu illness. They are called antiviral drugs and they can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They also can prevent serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia.

Make it your goal to get ready for flu season starting today. Go to the store and stock up on tissues, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers. Don't forget your daily multi-vitamins. And call you doctor today to schedule your flu vaccination.