How to Beat the Flu This Season

By cdc.gov

People 65 and over are at higher risk of serious complications from the flu. Human immune defenses become weaker with age. In past years, 71 to 85 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 and older. Likewise, between 54 to 70 percent of seasonal flu-related hospital stays occurred among people in that age group.

Get your flu shot
The best way to prevent the flu is with flu shot. Everyone over 6 months of age should get a seasonal flu shot. It is best to get your shot by the end of October. As long as flu viruses are circulating, flu shots are recommended - even as late as January or February. Flu vaccines are updated each year to keep up with changing viruses. Since your immunity drops over a year’s time, an annual shot is needed to make sure you’re protected against the current flu viruses.

Practice good health habits
One way to prevent illness is to avoid people who are sick. Washing hands often (see page 2) is another way. Always covering coughs (see page 3) prevents the spread of germs. See page 4 for other healthy habits that can prevent the spread of germs.

Seek medical help quickly if you think you have the flu
Visit your doctor for to see if you need treatment with anti-viral drugs. These drugs are more effective when started early to treat flu in people 65 and older.

While you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

Visit www.cdc.gov/flu/protect for more information.
When & How to Wash Your Hands

By cdc.gov

Keeping hands clean through good hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to clean hands.

When to Wash Your Hands

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

How to Wash Your Hands

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air-dry them.

What should you do if you don’t have soap and clean, running water?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs and might not remove harmful chemicals. Hand sanitizers are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.

How to use hand sanitizers

- Read the label to learn the correct amount.
- Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.
DID YOU KNOW?

You can pass the flu to others from 1 day before you have symptoms up to 5-7 days after you get sick. Some people might be able to infect others even longer.

New flu vaccines are produced every year to keep up with flu viruses that change rapidly over time. The flu shot’s effectiveness declines over time too – another reason to get a flu vaccine annually.

FAST FACTS

85%
Percent of seasonal flu-related deaths that have occurred in people 65 years and older in recent years

16%
Percent that hand washing reduces respiratory illness, like colds, in the general population
CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu.

The first and most important step is to get a flu vaccination each year. But if you get the flu, there are prescription antiviral drugs that can treat your illness. Early treatment is especially important for the elderly and people with certain chronic health conditions. Finally, everyday preventive actions may slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.

How does the flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Flu viruses also may spread when people touch something with flu virus on it and then touch their mouth, eyes, or nose. Many other viruses spread these ways too.

People infected with flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. That means you may be able to spread the flu to someone else before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick. Young children, those who are severely ill, and those who have severely weakened immune systems may be able to infect others for longer than 5-7 days.

What are everyday preventive actions?

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. The 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.
- 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.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.
- If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people and other measures.

What additional steps can I take at work to help stop the spread of germs that can cause respiratory illness, like flu?

- Routinely clean frequently touched objects and surfaces, including doorknobs, keyboards, and phones, to help remove germs.
- Make sure you have an adequate supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs, and disposable wipes.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.
HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
By Michelle Ritchie

Nobody wants to be in the hospital for the holidays, but studies have shown that more people are admitted to the hospital during the winter months than at other times of the year. Colder weather, less physical activity, and weight gain, and infections - such as the flu - can all contribute to the need hospitalization at some point during the colder months.

Prevention is best. By staying in touch with your doctor, together you can handle health problems before they become a bigger issue. If you have been diagnosed with a life-altering diagnosis such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary (COPD), Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) or Diabetes, has a nurse ever taught you how to manage your condition? Education is available to guide you through each of the challenges related to COPD, CHF, and Diabetes management. A Home Health nurse can give you detailed instructions on diet, warning signs, and how to use your new medications correctly.

Are you finding yourself unsteady or winded when you go to church, an appointment, or even walking around the house? Discussing this with your doctor is important so he/she can check for any underlying issues that could be contributing to this. A Home Health assessment can be useful to help the doctor identify and correct the issue. Our experienced therapists will help build strength and endurance, improve balance, and help identify easier ways to bathe, dress, and safely move around your house and community.

If you do find yourself in the hospital this holiday season, be sure to discuss home health with your doctor before you are discharged. The quality care that you receive at our hospital will follow you when you go home to keep you on the path to recovery.

Hospitalizations usually result in new medications. Studies have shown that two-thirds of hospital readmissions are related to adverse effects of medications. Having a home health nurse support you as you transition back home can help you avoid those pitfalls. A nurse will provide counseling to you and your caregiver on the proper use of medications and warning signs of adverse reactions.

Being in the hospital for any length of time can also lead to general weakness by the time you are released. The therapists will assess your home for safety and make sure you have all the tools necessary to regain your strength. The goal of home health is to help you remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.

Let us help you be home for the holidays. If you feel you could benefit from further education/counseling on your disease condition or have concerns about your safety in the home, discuss Home Health services with your doctor.

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5 Tips for Managing Diabetes During the Holidays

Use these tips as a road map for managing your diabetes while making the most of the holiday season.

'Tis the season for family, festivity, and food—lots of food. Temptations are all around, and parties and travel can disrupt daily routines. That means it's also the season when eating healthy, staying active, and taking medication on schedule is harder to do. Here are 5 tips to help you ring in the new year feeling good while staying on track.

1. Stick to Your Plan
Managing your diabetes during the holidays should be the same as managing it every day, with a few exceptions. You won't always be able to control what food you're served, and you're bound to see other people indulging. Prepare for the extra challenges and you'll handle them well:
- Eat, be physically active, and take your medication close to the usual times.
- Invited to a party? Offer to bring a healthy dish along.
- If you have a sweet treat, cut back on other carbohydrates (like potatoes and bread) during the meal.

2. Stay in Control
When you face a spread of delicious holiday food, you'll find healthy choices easier to make if you:
- Have a small plate of the foods you like best and then move away from the buffet table.
- Start with vegetables to take the edge off your appetite.
- Slow down and savor. It takes time for your brain to realize you're full.
- Avoid or limit alcohol. If you do have an alcoholic drink, have it with food. Alcohol can lower blood sugar and interact with diabetes medicines.

Also plan to stay in control of your blood sugar. Check it more often during the holidays and adjust your medication if needed.

3. Fit in Favorites
You can have some of your favorite foods as long as you limit how big the portion is and how often you have it.

Choose foods you really love and can't get any other time of year, like Aunt Edna's pecan pie. Indulge in a small serving, and make sure to count it in your meal plan.

4. Stay Active
It's easy to put physical activity last on the list during the holiday rush, but being active is always time well spent. Get moving with friends and family, such as taking a walk after a holiday dinner.

Being active can help make up for eating more than usual, and it reduces stress during one of the most stressful times of the year.

5. Get Enough Sleep
If you go out more often and stay out later during the holidays, you're likely to get less sleep. Sleep loss can make it harder to control your blood sugar. And when you're sleep deprived, you'll tend to eat more, and prefer high fat, high-sugar food. Aim for 7 to 8 hours per night to guard against mindless eating.

Most of all, remember what the season is about—celebrating and connecting with the people you care about. When you focus more on the fun, you won't focus as much on the food.
The 12 DAYS of SAFETY

1. Never use lighted candles near trees or boughs

2. Keep poisonous plants out of reach of children and pets

3. Keep trees away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources

4. Make sure your tree has a stable platform

5. Choose an artificial tree that is labeled fire resistant

6. If using a natural tree, make sure it is well watered

7. Check holiday lights for fraying, bare spots, gaps in the insulation or excessive kinking in the wire

8. Turn off all tree lights and decorations when not in use

9. When putting up decorations, use a step stool or ladder to reach high places

10. Designate a sober driver

11. When preparing a meal, wash hands, utensils, sink and anything else that touches raw meat

12. Reheat leftovers to at least 165°F

Happy Holidays

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL®