



Seniors among Groups Hardest Hit by Flu

CDC Says Take 3 This Flu Season

For most people, getting the flu means feeling achy and feverish for a week or so. But for some people, especially those 65 years and older, the flu can be much more serious, even deadly.

Each year in the U.S., an average of 36,000 people die, and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from serious flu complications. Ninety percent of flu deaths and more than half of hospitalizations occur in people 65 years and older.

People in this age group are at high risk for serious flu complications because they have weaker immune systems. This makes them more vulnerable to illnesses -- including flu -- that can have serious complications.

Fortunately, there are actions you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu this year. First, take time to get a flu vaccine. A flu vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu, and this year there is an all-time high supply of vaccine.

"Flu season can last into the spring so getting a vaccine later can still protect against the flu," says Dr. Nancy Cox, Director of the Influenza Division at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Second, make sure to take everyday actions that can help stop the spread of germs, such as covering your nose and mouth with a tissue, and washing your hands with soap and water often. Remember to stay away from others if you are sick, and try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth, since germs can spread this way.

And third, if you do get flu symptoms, there are antiviral drugs that can treat the flu. These prescription drugs should be started within 48 hours of getting sick. So be on the lookout for symptoms including a fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. "Antiviral drugs are an important second line of defense against the flu. Your healthcare provider will decide whether you should take flu antiviral drugs," explains Dr. Cox.

So this flu season, take simple steps to do your part to protect yourself and others from the flu.

Side bar

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1. Take time to get a flu vaccine.
2. Take everyday preventive actions.
3. Take antiviral drugs if you doctor says to.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6358 (TTY).