



Share the Wellness Tip

January 25, 2013

Don't Forget Your Flu Shot

The flu season has hit early this year and it has hit hard. As of the last week of December, the CDC has categorized the illness as "widespread" in 41 states. Many people of all ages have already experienced this year—the fever, chills, headache, dry cough, runny nose, sore throat, muscle aches—that can make having the flu miserable. And more bad news, the CDC is predicting a significantly worse-than-normal flu season this year.

But it is not too late to get a flu vaccine for you or the children in your life. The CDC recommends an annual flu vaccine for all those ages 6 months and older. Talk to your child's doctor to find out if the flu vaccine is a good idea for your family.

Vaccinations and healthy habits can help your family stay flu-free. If you care for children younger than 6 months, you should get the vaccine, too. Infants have a high risk for serious flu, but they're too young to be vaccinated. This year, the 2012-2013 flu vaccine will protect you against three groups of influenza viruses, including the 2009 H1N1 virus.

The CDC recommends these steps to slow the spread of the flu and other respiratory illnesses:

- Teach kids to wash their hands thoroughly after wiping their nose and before eating.
- Help young children sneeze or cough into a tissue, then throw it away at once. If no tissue is available, cough into a sleeve.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If you or your child gets sick with a respiratory illness, like flu, limit contact with others as much as possible to help prevent spreading illness. Stay home (or keep your child home) for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to seek medical care or for other necessities. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.

If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice.

You can do your part to help prevent the spread of the flu outbreak. If you or a family member are experiencing flu-like symptoms you should contact your health care provider or local health department.

To find a flu vaccine in your area visit flu.gov.

Sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#); [Chicago Tribune, January 8, 2013](#)

