



Fight Against the Flu

The influenza virus (commonly called the flu) is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

To protect yourself, your family, and your community, follow the three steps below:

1. Get a flu vaccine.

An annual flu shot is the most effective way to prevent the flu.

Even though there are many different strands of the flu virus and a shot can only protect you against one kind, scientists and doctors research which kind will be the most common to create the vaccine each year.

It is especially important for young children, pregnant women, and adults 65+, plus anyone who lives with them, to be vaccinated.

2. Practice preventive hygiene.

Everyday preventive actions can stop the spread of the flu and all other germs:

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, avoid close contact with others.
- If you have the flu, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (unless seeking medical care).
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue away.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often—especially after touching high-traffic areas like door knobs and hand rails. If soap and water aren't available, use hand sanitizer.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that may easily be contaminated, such as your phone, keys, work station, and door knobs.

3. Treat.

So you got the flu shot, did your best to avoid germs, and still got the flu? It's time for plan B: treatment.

How do you know if you have the flu? Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose

- Body aches
- Headaches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing

You may have the flu and not experience all of these symptoms. Your doctor can diagnose the flu for you, and may prescribe antiviral drugs. They will help to make your illness milder and shorter, and may also prevent serious complications from the flu. They are most effective when started two days after you get sick, but they can still help if started later.

Antiviral drugs are not antibiotics, and are not available over the counter. It is important to never take antibiotics for viral infections such as the flu, a cold, and most sore throats, coughs, sinus infections, and ear infections. Doing so will make your body more immune to antibiotics so they can't help you when you really need them.

-Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention