

KEY INFLUENZA MESSAGES

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CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu: vaccination, everyday preventive actions, and use of antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

1. Take time to get a flu vaccine.
 - CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu.
 - While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the three viruses that research suggests will be most common this season.
 - The 2012-2013 flu vaccine will protect against an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus and an influenza B virus.
 - Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine as soon as the 2012-2013 flu vaccines are available.
 - Vaccination of high-risk people is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
 - People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.
 - The full list of high risk conditions is available on the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm.
 - Vaccination is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high-risk people to keep from spreading the flu to high-risk people.
 - Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to get a flu vaccine. People who care for them should be vaccinated instead to protect them from getting the flu.

2. Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs that can cause respiratory illness like the flu. While these actions are helpful, remember that vaccination is the most important step in preventing the flu.
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
 - 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 or mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for

other necessities. (Your 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.
 - For more information, see <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits/>
3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.
- If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can treat your illness.
 - Antiviral drugs are a **second line** of defense to **treat** the flu if you get sick.
 - Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
 - Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. Antiviral drugs fight viruses in your body. Antibiotics fight bacterial infections.
 - Not everyone who has flu symptoms needs antiviral drugs. Your doctor will decide whether antiviral drugs are right for you.
 - Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick.
 - There also are data showing that antiviral drugs may prevent serious flu complications. In someone with a high-risk medical condition, treatment with an antiviral drug can mean the difference between having a milder illness versus a very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay.
 - Antiviral drugs are not a substitute for getting a flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is the best way modern medicine currently has to protect against this serious disease.
 - If you get the flu, the earlier you begin taking antivirals, the better. They work best if started within two days, but there is data to suggest they can still be beneficial even up to 5 days after getting sick. This would be especially important in a high-risk person that was very sick.
 - For more information about antiviral drugs, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm>
- For more information about the flu or the flu vaccine, call 1-800-CDC-INFO, visit www.cdc.gov/flu, www.flu.gov, or m.cdc.gov/flu on your mobile phone or PDA, or sign up for CDC flu texts at <http://www.cdc.gov/mobile/textmessaging/>.