

Everyday Preventive Actions That Can Help Fight the Flu

CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu.

The first and most important step is to get a flu vaccination each year. However, if you get the flu, there are prescription antiviral drugs that can treat your illness. Finally, everyday preventive actions may slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.

How is the flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Flu viruses also may spread when people touch something with the flu virus on it and then touch their mouth, eyes, or nose. 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.

What are everyday preventive actions?

Everyday preventive actions are steps that people can take to help slow the spread of germs that cause the flu. These include the following personal and community actions:

- **Cover your nose and mouth with the crook of your elbow or upper arm when you cough or sneeze. This will block the spread of droplets from your mouth or nose that could contain flu virus.**
- **Proper and consistent hand washing is essential. Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet if it is not automatic. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer; apply to palm of one hand; rub hands together covering all surfaces until dry.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as germs spread this way. Avoid sharing objects. If an activity requires the passing around of an object, be sure to wash hands afterwards.**
- **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.**
- **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 the illness. Stay home (or keep your child home) for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to seek medical care. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.**
- **Disinfect common surfaces.**
- **If an outbreak of flu occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people and other measures.**

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov