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HEALTH ALERT

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2017-2018 Flu Season Alert Update

The Office of Developmental Programs is re-issuing this Health Alert due to the high number of flu cases that are being reported nationally. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are reporting that this year's flu season is now more intense than any since 2009. Despite the late date, it is still being recommended that Americans get the flu shot if they have not done so. **This updated Health Alert also contains a section on the emergency warning signs of the flu from the CDC. If you have the [emergency warning signs](#) of flu sickness, you should go to the emergency room.**

What do I need to know for the 2017-2018 flu season?

Get immunized against the flu annually.

The CDC recommends those who are aged 6 months and older get a flu shot each year. However, it is especially important that some people who are at risk for complications get immunized. These include:

- People who have certain medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorders, endocrine disorders, kidney disorders, metabolic disorders, liver disorders, and morbid obesity
- Pregnant women
- People 65 years and older
- People who have a weakened immune system

- People who live with or care for others who are at high risk of developing serious complications

Do I need a flu vaccine every year?

Yes. A flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing. The flu vaccine is formulated each year to keep up with the flu viruses as they change. There are different types of vaccine available and your healthcare provider can recommend what is best. The nasal spray vaccine **is not** recommended for use for this flu season.

Is there treatment if I get sick with the flu?

Yes. If you get sick, there are drugs that can treat flu illness. They are called antiviral drugs and they can make your illness milder and help you feel better faster. They also can prevent serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia.

Can I do anything else to help prevent the flu?

Yes. In addition to getting the flu vaccine, you can help prevent the spread of influenza. You can practice good personal hygiene: wash your hands frequently, cough or sneeze into your elbow, and stay away from people if you or they are ill.

Do I have the flu or a cold?

The flu and the common cold have similar symptoms. Symptoms such as fever, body aches, tiredness, and cough are more common and intense with the flu. Flu symptoms include:

- A 100° F or higher fever or feeling feverish (not everyone with the flu has a fever)
- A cough and/or sore throat
- A runny or stuffy nose
- Headaches and/or body aches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea (most common in children)

If these symptoms are present, contact your health care practitioner to determine the best course of treatment.

What are the emergency warning signs of flu sickness?

In children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for any infant who has any of these signs:

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

In adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Where can I get more information about flu?

The CDC has a wealth of information about flu and preventing flu. Their website, listed below, contains posters and fact sheets that you can use to spread the word about preventing flu. Likewise, the PA Department of Health's website on influenza is an excellent resource. For information about where to get a flu shot, you can contact your health care provider or your local Department of Health regional office. Many pharmacies give flu shots for a small cost, but find out first if your health insurance will cover it. The websites below have a flu vaccine finder...simply enter your zip code to find a flu vaccine location near you.

Resources

PA Department of Health:

[Influenza - What you need to know!](#)

Emergency Warning Signs

[What are the emergency warning signs?](#)

US Department of Health and Human Services:

<http://www.flu.gov> [\(Vaccine finder\)](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu> [\(Vaccine finder\)](#)