The thought of germs and flu bugs can make your skin crawl. This season, avoid being a target for the flu by building a few preventative steps into your everyday life.

Battling the Flu Bug

PROTECT YOURSELF WITH EVERYDAY PREVENTION

The seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses and while the seasonal flu can cause mild to severe illness, in some instances, it can be fatal.

Here's How the Flu Spreads

Flu viruses typically spread from person to person through the coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. It can happen even before they realize they are ill. People may also become infected by touching things such as door knobs or desktops and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.

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Stick it to the Flu: Get Vaccinated

Protect yourself. The CDC suggests the **single best way to prevent the seasonal flu is by getting a flu** vaccination each year.

The "flu shot."An inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) is given with a needle. The seasonal flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older.

About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop that protect against influenza virus infection. Flu vaccines will not give you the flu and do not protect against flu-like illnesses.

Flu vaccinations are available through your doctor's office, at local clinics and some of your local pharmacies. They may even be covered under your health benefits.

Practice Smart Habits

Think before you touch. Door knobs and desk supplies are a flu bugs' playground. If you've handled items from other workspaces, keep from touching your eyes, nose and mouth until you can wash your hands.

Sneeze in Your Elbow. This technique is now an effective means of preventing the spread of flu germs from sneezes.

Hand-washing 101. Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Stay Clear. Try to avoid close contact with sick people. While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

Got the Bug? Stay in Bed. If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends 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.)

Good Health Helps. When you are generally healthy, you sport a strong immune system. Stay on top of good eating habits, get rest and don't skip out on exercise.

An Antiviral Approach

If you get seasonal or H1N1 flu, antiviral drugs can help treat the flu.

Influenza antiviral drugs are prescription drugs (pills, liquid, or inhaler) that decrease the ability of flu viruses to reproduce. While getting a flu vaccine each year is the first and most important step in protecting against flu, antiviral drugs offer a second line of defense in the prevention and treatment of flu.

Who is treated with influenza antiviral drugs?

Most people ill with influenza will recover without complications. Some people are at increased risk of influenza complications and are prioritized for treatment with influenza antiviral drugs this season.

They include:

- People hospitalized with suspected or confirmed influenza
- People with suspected or confirmed influenza who are at higher risk for complications.
  - Children younger than 5 years old
  - Adults 65 years and older
  - Pregnant women
  - Those with chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions or those under 19 years of age receiving long-term aspirin therapy

Need More Answers?

Wellmark's Personal Health Assistants are available 24/7 to help you understand the risks and how to avoid them. If you have further questions about how to protect yourself from the seasonal flu call us at **1-800-724-9122**.

The information presented is not to be a substitute for the care of your personal physician.

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