

What Should I Do to Prepare for Cold/Flu Season?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone as the most important step in protecting yourself against the seasonal flu. Flu shots are extremely important for people over age 65, pregnant women, children aged 6 months to 4 years, and people with chronic lung or heart disorders or poor immune systems due to disease. You should not get a flu shot if you are allergic to eggs or have had an adverse reaction to a previous flu shot.

The 2011 flu shot will protect against three major flu strains that researchers predict will cause the most illness this year – H3N2, influenza B and H1N1 – the virus that caused so much illness last year. You need to get a flu shot every year because the viruses change every year.

Here are 4 additional tips to prevent colds and flu:

1) Wash your hands* often throughout the day:

- a. Before and after eating
 - b. After using the restroom
 - c. After using shared phones, keyboards or other office equipment
 - d. After shaking hands with someone
 - e. After sneezing and blowing your nose or coughing in your hand
- *When washing your hands, use hot water and soap and scrub vigorously for 20 seconds.

2) Between hand washings, use a hand sanitizer that contains alcohol.

3) Avoid touching your hand to your nose, eyes or mouth

4) Avoid close contact with sick people.

5) Keep your immune system strong by getting at least 7-8 hours sleep most nights; eating a healthy variety of foods – especially fruits and vegetables; exercising daily; not smoking and managing your stress level.

For more information on how to care for yourself with colds or flu, go to www.cdc.gov.

