

# THE PROACTIVE

Volume 10

Flu Season Preparedness

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## A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### Prevention and Treatment

One of the best ways to prevent getting the flu is to **get vaccinated** each year before flu season. Flu season can start as early as October and will reach its peak sometime in January or later. The flu vaccine can take about two weeks to become effective, so getting your vaccine before the spread of influenza begins is best.

The vaccine is not 100% effective, so it is important to take additional measures to reduce the spread of the virus:

#### ■ Wash

Thorough and frequent hand-washing can help prevent the transfer of infection. Always wash your hands before eating. Hand sanitizer is a good alternative if soap and water is unavailable.

#### ■ Contain

Be sure to cover your mouth when you cough and/or sneeze. Always use a tissue or your inner elbow.

#### ■ Avoid

- Avoiding a crowd during peak flu season can help reduce the risk of getting the flu. The virus spreads very easily in schools, office buildings, and on public transportation.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Do not share your food, drink, or utensils with others.
- If you are feeling sick, do your best to stay home.

For most people, influenza clears up on its own. Ways to ease your symptoms include:

- Using a decongestant for nasal or sinus congestion.
- Using an antihistamine to help with sneezing, itching, and nasal discharge.
- Using cough medicine. Ask your pharmacist which combination, if any, would be appropriate for your cough.
- Using an over-the-counter pain reliever for fever and body aches. (Remember: children should avoid aspirin.)
- Drinking lots of fluids and using salt water gargles as well as over-the-counter medicated lozenges to soothe a sore throat.



## Flu Season Preparedness

### Signs, Symptoms, Prevention, and Treatment

Influenza, more commonly known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times, can be fatal. The flu is very unpredictable, and its severity can vary widely from season to season and person to person.

It is believed that most cases of the flu virus are contracted through the spreading of droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Encountering the flu virus by touching a surface or object that the flu virus lives on is also a possibility. An individual can spread the flu virus before he/she feels any symptoms themselves, as well as when they are sick. An adult that comes down with the flu can infect others beginning 1 day before he/she develops symptoms and up to 7 days after becoming sick. Children and those with a weakened immune system may have a longer time frame of when they are contagious.

People who are at a higher risk of flu complications include:

- Children under the age of five; especially those under two years of age
- Adults older than 65
- Pregnant women

- People with weakened immune systems, chronic illness or diabetes
- Residents of nursing homes or long-term facilities

### Signs and Symptoms



Individuals who contract the flu experience a wide range of signs and symptoms which can include the following:

- Fever\*/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle and/or body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue

\*Please note that not everyone who contracts the flu will have a fever.

Flu season is here.  
Minimize your risk. Do your part.