

CLUW News Health Tip

FLU

Are you one of the millions of Americans unable to receive an injection of flu vaccine this year? Healthy adults under 65 are expected to forego the vaccine due to a shortage this flu season.

Influenza is a contagious disease caused by a virus. When a person who has the flu sneezes, coughs, or even talks, the flu virus is expelled into the air and may be inhaled by anyone nearby. Flu may also be transmitted by direct hand contact.

Some steps you can take to avoid getting flu this year are the following:

1. Stay healthy. Don't get run down by lack of sleep and poor eating habits. Dress adequately for cold weather. Keeping your immune system strong makes you less vulnerable to the flu virus and even the common cold.
2. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and encourage others to do the same.
3. Employees who are ill with fever, chills, weakness, muscle aches, and other symptoms of flu should be at home and not at work. Keep a reasonable distance away from persons who are ill in order to avoid inhaling any germs they may expel into the air.
4. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth as much as possible. Wash your hands before touching your eyes, nose or mouth to avoid introducing the flu virus or any other germs you may have picked up.
5. Insist that there be running water, soap and towels in workplace bathrooms. You may also wish to purchase an instant hand sanitizer (eg. Purell) to keep at your work station.
6. The flu vaccine given by injection is made with inactivated virus. Live vaccine (FluMist) is given by inhalation and is available for healthy persons between 5 and 49 years of age.
7. Antiviral drugs can be prescribed to treat or prevent flu for persons at high risk of complications during a flu outbreak. However, they have side effects and their necessity must be determined by your physician.

If you get the flu, it is usually moderately severe in healthy adults. After the initial symptoms and fever subside you may be exhausted for a few days. Most people are back on their feet in a week.