



What Can You Do to Avoid the Flu?

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Flu season, December through March, will soon be upon us. People over 60 years of age and those with chronic illnesses like asthma, heart disease, or diabetes, should get vaccinated for influenza (the flu) in the fall every year to avoid pneumonia and other complications. Flu shots can be received from your primary care doctor's office.

For people over 60 or adults with chronic illnesses, flu shots are provided free from the County of Orange Health Care Agency at numerous community sites throughout the county.

How can you avoid getting or spreading the flu?

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Cover your nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Eat well: a lot of fruits and vegetables and whole grain products.
- Dress appropriately for the weather.
- Minimize the time you spend in crowded places with people you don't know (especially children) during flu season.
- Skip kisses and hugs with relatives who are ill.
- Avoid contact with others when you are not feeling well.

How can you tell it's the flu and not just a cold? (Both are viral infections.)

- Both colds and the flu involve nasal/sinus congestion, headaches, possibly a sore throat, coughing, and a fever.
- Flu can bring a fever of up to 104 degrees, chills, whole body aches, weakness, loss of appetite, dry cough, and a severely sore throat.
- A middle-aged person with the flu is usually too sick to get out of bed for 3-5 days.

What do you do if it is the flu?

- The flu, like a cold, is NOT treatable with antibiotics, so the general recommendation is to treat the symptoms with over-the-counter cold and flu medications, drink lots of clear fluids, have light meals, and get plenty of bed rest.
- If the flu changes to a bacterial infection, such as pneumonia or bronchitis, your doctor will then prescribe antibiotics.
- Elderly people and those with chronic diseases should see their doctor whenever illness is prolonged, if you have a high fever, or if you experience difficulty breathing.

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