


If You Are Not Able To Receive the FLU VACCINE

During a usual flu season, approximately 70 million Americans are immunized against influenza. This year, because of national flu vaccine shortages, it is going to be more important than ever to protect yourself from the virus. If you are unable to find influenza vaccine this year, the following suggestions will help prevent you from developing the flu or at least minimize complications.

1. **Build up your immune system.** Our bodies fight infection every day, not just during flu season. We, however, need plenty of sleep and nutritious food to help combat bacteria and viruses we are exposed to every day. Don't let yourself become run down, make sure you get 8 hours of sleep per night and eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables to get sufficient natural vitamin C.
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?objectid=320B361B-E768-40A5-A769CE23D75D2B79>
2. **Prevent skin contact with the virus.** Influenza and the common cold are quite contagious. When a person sneezes or coughs, they exhale numerous flu particles, which can then land and live on surfaces such as counters, pens, glasses, (even on us) for a few hours. So the best prevention is to block contact with potentially infected surfaces. This can be accomplished by carrying a small bottle of hand sanitizer in your pocket and using it after you touch public surfaces or have hand-to-hand contact with other people. The alternative is frequent handwashing.

<http://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/pressrelease.htm>
3. **Limit exposure to infected people.** Unfortunately, this requires all people being aware of their ability to infect other people when they are ill with a respiratory illness. If you have a fever and cough, don't go to work or school. Instead, stay home and get plenty of rest and help your immune system do its thing! You will get better quicker and you will spare other people the misery of influenza symptoms. If you need to see a doctor, be sure to ask the registration clerk or nurse for a mask to wear while seated in the waiting room. This will really help prevent the spread of disease to other unsuspecting patients.
4. **Take an anti-viral to limit flu symptoms:** There are anti-viral medications that can limit the intensity and/or duration of symptoms with influenza. The trick is that you must begin the medication within 36 to 48 hours of being exposed to the virus. If you develop a high fever associated with a dry cough, contact your doctor about prescribing this type of medication.
<http://www.tamiflu.com> or http://www.fda.gov/cder/foi/label/2003/21036slr006_relenza_lbl.pdf
5. **Talk to your doctor about getting the pneumonia vaccine.** One of the most serious complications of influenza is a secondary bacterial pneumonia. This is especially true for the elderly and people with chronic diseases such as diabetes and lung/heart disease. Talk to your doctor to see if you are a good candidate for the pneumonia vaccine.
<http://www.multiplan.com/healthwell/wellness/pneumonia.cfm>
6. **Know when to seek help!** If you have a chronic medical condition like diabetes, asthma or heart disease, or you are over 65 years of age, then it is very important to let your doctor know whenever you develop a high fever and dry cough. If you do not have any of the above conditions, you should contact your doctor if:
 - a. Your fever does not improve after 3 to 5 days.
 - b. You are unable to keep liquids down and have become dehydrated.
 - c. You improve; then develop a productive cough and/or fever. You may have developed a secondary bacterial pneumonia.



Let's work together this flu season to keep everyone as healthy as possible!

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