



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Get Your Flu Shot at a Live Well Center Near You** Take Action Now to Prevent the Flu

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by various flu viruses. Influenza is different from a cold and comes on suddenly. It can cause severe sickness and may even lead to death.

The 2017-2018 influenza season was a high severity season, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They report that influenza-like illness (ILI) peaked at 7.5 percent, the highest since the 2009 flu pandemic.

The flu vaccine is the best way to prevent getting the illness. The vaccine also helps lessen symptoms for people who do come down with it. Health experts originally recommend all adults and children older than six months receive a flu vaccine by the end of October 2018. Although that date has passed, those who receive flu shots later in the fall or winter will still be protected. It's best to get vaccinated four to six weeks before peak flu season, December through February.

A common misconception is that flu shots can cause the flu. This belief is often the reason why individuals do not get the flu shot. This is not true, however. The CDC reports flu vaccines given with a needle are made with either flu viruses that have been inactivated, which are not infectious, or with no flu vaccine viruses at all.

The influenza vaccine helps prevent an individual from getting the infection, but isn't 100 percent effective. The Mayo Clinic recommends the following safeguards to reduce the spread of infection:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inner crook of your elbow to avoid contaminating your hands.
- Avoid large crowds during peak flu season.

Early symptoms that help distinguish the flu from a cold include a quick onset of fever, headache, and muscular aches and pains, often followed by fatigue, sneezing, coughing, and congestion. For most people, influenza goes away on its own. For some individuals, however, influenza and its complications can be deadly. People at higher risk of developing flu complications include adults 65 years and older, those with weakened immune systems, individuals living with chronic diseases, pregnant women, and young children under age five (especially those under two years). Contact your physician if any of the following emergency warning signs of flu appear:

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**In Children**

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

**In Adults**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Need a flu vaccine? Contact a Live Well Community Health Center near you to schedule a flu shot.

<http://hccnetwork.org/livewell-home>.

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