



Seven Simple Ways to Avoid the Flu

LiveLifeWell

Flu season (October through April) is almost here, and the flu's in the news a lot these days. That's because of widespread concern about the H1N1 (or "swine") flu virus, a new and different strain that may be capable of causing more illness—or more severe cases—than usual. When you realize that the normal seasonal flu virus will be on the move as well, it's no wonder health experts say this flu season may be worse than in past years.

Symptoms of both types of flu include high fever, headache, extreme fatigue, a dry cough, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. Some people also experience vomiting and diarrhea. But don't worry: there's a lot you can do so you don't get the seasonal flu virus. Consider these preventive practices:

- 1. LiveLifeWell every day.** Keep your body healthy and strong by eating right, drinking lots of water, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and eliminating tobacco use. Find more timely tips at iLiveLifeWell.com.
- 2. Wash your hands. Wash them again.** Using soap and water or alcohol-based hands cleaner, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds...long enough to sing the "Happy Birthday" song. Wash your hands any time you blow your nose, sneeze or cough; eat or prepare food; use the restroom; use exercise, copier or fax machines; or see that your hands look dirty. After washing them carefully, dry your hands with a *clean* towel, or air dry them.
- 3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash.** Or cough into your upper sleeve, *not* into your hands.
- 4. Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes.** Germs spread quickly that way.
- 5. Avoid sick people whenever possible.** Just like a cold virus, a flu virus is usually spread from one person to the next when the infected person coughs or sneezes.
- 6. Take time to get vaccinated.** Nearly everyone can avoid the seasonal flu or reduce their risk by getting vaccinations. Ask your doctor if you should get the seasonal flu vaccine, the H1N1 flu vaccine or both. Demand for vaccinations may be extra heavy this year; schedule your appointment as soon as possible for protection all season long.
- 7. Encourage friends and family members in higher risk groups to get vaccinated.** These include children ages 6 months to 19 years; pregnant women; people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or weakened immunity; day care, school, and health care workers; nursing home residents; and caregivers of high risk people.