

Natomas Family Practice Flu Newsletter

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Seasonal Influenza (Flu) is a potentially serious, contagious disease. It can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu can lead to hospitalization and even death. The flu season from 2018-2019 was moderate in severity, that lasted a record-breaking 21 weeks. The best protection is getting a flu vaccine.

Flu activity often begins to increase in October, most commonly peaks between December and February, but can last as late as May. It is recommended that everyone ages 6 months and older get a flu vaccine by the end of October. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body to protect against flu virus infection.

What does the flu look like?

Symptoms of seasonal flu can vary from person to person but usually include:

- Fever (temperature higher than 100°F, or 37.8°C) that can last two to five days
- Headache and muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Cough and sore throat may also be present

Most people with the flu have fever and muscle aches, however some people also have cold-like symptoms (runny nose, sore throat). Flu symptoms usually improve over two to five days, although the illness may last for a week or more. Weakness and fatigue may persist for several weeks.

Who should get the Flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is recommended for nearly all people six months of age and older. The vaccine is especially important for:

- Adults age 50 or older

Adults age 65 or older.

- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Adults and children who have chronic lung or heart conditions. This includes children with asthma.
- Adults and children with chronic diseases, such as diabetes or kidney disease.
- Adults and children with HIV infection or who have received organ or stem cell transplants.
- Children and teenagers age 6 months to 18 years who are taking long-term aspirin therapy and might be at risk for Reye syndrome.
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season.
- Adults and children who might transmit influenza to high-risk individuals (including people listed above). This includes healthcare workers, workers in nursing homes, home health workers, and people who live with a high-risk individual.

How do I protect myself and my family from the flu?

1. Get a flu vaccine.

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine by the end of October. Getting a flu vaccine every year provides the best protection against flu.

2. Take everyday actions to stop the spread of germs.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people, and if you become sick limit your contact with others. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and wash your hands often.

3. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

If you get sick with flu, prescription flu antiviral drugs can be used to treat flu illness. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.

The tips and resources below will help you learn about steps you can take to protect yourself and others from flu and help stop the spread of germs.

1. **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
2. **Stay home when you are sick.**

If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.

3. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Flu and other serious respiratory illnesses, that are spread by cough, sneezing, or unclean hands.

4. **Clean your hands.**

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

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