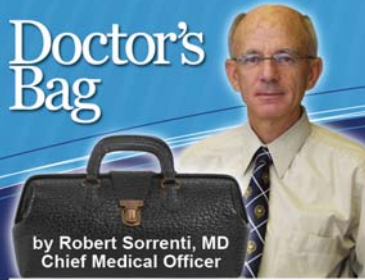


Doctor's Bag



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HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE THE FLU?

Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms. A doctor's exam may be needed to tell whether you have developed the flu or a complication of the flu.

If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about your illness, especially if you are at high risk for complications of the flu, you should consult your personal physician.

Remember, the best way to avoid seasonal influenza and its complications is to reduce your risk of infection. Call your doctor to schedule an annual flu vaccine.

HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

3 STEPS TO FIGHT THE FLU

Here are three ways to fight seasonal influenza, courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

1. Get a Flu Vaccine

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting yourself against this serious disease. The flu vaccine can protect you from getting sick from the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. It also can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus.



In general, anyone wishing protection from the flu should get a flu shot. The CDC recommends annual flu vaccines for the following high-risk groups: children age 6-59 months; women who will be pregnant during flu season; people 50 years of age and older; people of any age with chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and diabetes); people who live in long-term care facilities; health care professionals; and those who care for or have contact with high-risk individuals.

2. Take Everyday Preventive Actions

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. If you get the flu, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others.

3. Take Flu Antiviral Drugs if Your Doctor Prescribes Them

Antiviral drugs are an important treatment option. *However, they are not a substitute for vaccination.* Flu antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that keep flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They also may prevent serious flu complications. This could be especially important for people at high risk.

DidUKnow?

- 5%-20% of the U.S. population gets the flu each year.
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized with flu complications each year.
- 20,000 of those hospitalized are children younger than age 5.
- 36,000 people die from flu annually. Most deaths occur in the elderly; however, even young children can be affected.
- Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications.
- Of the 250+ million Americans for whom flu vaccination was recommended last year:
 - ✓ Only 22% of children ages 6-23 months were vaccinated.
 - ✓ 16.5% of children ages 24-59 months were vaccinated.
 - ✓ 42% of adults ages 50-64 were vaccinated.
 - ✓ 72% of adults ages 65 and older were vaccinated.
- 148 million doses of the flu vaccine will be manufactured this year — an all-time high.

Newsletter Information Sources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Preventing Seasonal Flu, CDC Influenza E-brief, 2008-2009 Flu Facts for Policy Makers, September 2008 Issue