

Health Bulletin



There *Is* Something You Can Do For The Flu: Debunking Myths About Flu Treatment

(NAPSA)—Each year, the flu affects more than 40 million Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Yet it seems many people think there is nothing that can be done about the flu. The reality is that you don't have to take the flu lying down.

"This lack of understanding about how to fight flu may lead to unnecessary suffering, missed workdays, and spreading of illness to others," explains Dr. Donald Perlman, family health and flu expert at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. "Many of my patients don't realize that the flu can be treated with prescription medications called antivirals."

Dr. Perlman helps identify commonly held misconceptions and shares the facts about treating and preventing this serious and often underestimated illness that results in an average of 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations in the United States each year, according to the CDC.

Myth: If you don't get the vaccine by December, then it's too late.

FACT: The flu season can begin as early as October and last through May. Although people are encouraged to get the flu vaccine before December, it's actually never too late in the season to get it. The flu vaccine can provide protection even if flu is already circulating.

Myth: Getting a flu vaccine is the only way to fight the flu.

FACT: While vaccine is the first line of defense for preventing flu, the CDC recommends a "Take 3" approach—practicing good hygiene and use of prescription antiviral medications (if a doctor recommends them) are both important to the equation.

Myth: If you start to experience flu symptoms, it's best to wait a few days to see if it's just a 24-hour bug.

FACT: If you begin experiencing flu symptoms—sudden onset of fever, aches, chills and fatigue—*don't wait*, see a doctor immediately for proper diagnosis and treatment. A doctor can prescribe an antiviral medication, such as Tamiflu or Relenza, that will help you feel better faster. Antivirals can also be prescribed to people who have been exposed to the flu (like at home or at work) to help prevent them from getting sick.

Speed is critical for both treatment and prevention—antivirals must be taken within 48 hours of symptom onset or exposure.

Flu F.A.C.T.S.

Think You Have the Flu? What Are Flu Symptoms?
Know the F.A.C.T.S.

- F** – fever
- A** – aches
- C** – chills
- T** – tiredness
- S** – sudden symptoms

You don't need to experience all of these symptoms to have the flu. If you have one or two, it's recommended that you see your doctor.



Source: FluFACTS.com

Myth: Antibiotics cure the flu.

FACT: Antibiotics have a completely different purpose, and should never be used to treat the influenza virus. Antibiotics are medicines that kill bacteria and are only useful for treating bacterial infections. Whereas, the flu is a viral infection, not bacterial, requiring a different treatment called antiviral medications. Additionally, taking antibiotics for the flu is useless and will actually contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance, which is a growing health concern.

Myth: Over-the-counter (OTC) flu remedies and chicken noodle soup are the best ways to treat the flu.

FACT: People experiencing flu-like symptoms will commonly take OTC medications (such as pain relievers and decongestants) to relieve discomforts, but these medications do not treat the flu virus. Prescription antiviral medications attack the virus at its source, which can reduce the duration of the flu and may lessen the risk of serious complications.

Available in a capsule and liquid suspension form, Tamiflu is the only oral antiviral medication recommended by the CDC for influenza treatment and prevention during the 2008-2009 flu season. The CDC also recommends Relenza, an inhaled antiviral medication.

To learn more about treating and preventing the flu, visit FluFACTS.com.