

Tips For Staying Healthy During Flu Season

(NAPSA)—Each year, as many as 20 percent of Americans get the flu. Because the flu is contagious, prevention is the best medicine, and a few simple steps can help keep families healthy this winter. CVS pharmacist Amy Arbogast offers the following tips to help avoid cold and flu and manage symptoms if they occur.

What is the flu?

Influenza, more commonly known as the flu, is a respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. Flu symptoms can include fever, headache, sore throat, dry cough, stuffy or runny nose and muscle ache.

What is the first step in preventing cold and flu?

A flu vaccination is the first line of defense, and flu shots are readily available in many communities.

Who should get a flu shot?

The Centers for Disease Control recommends a yearly flu vaccination, especially for people ages 50 and older, those with chronic disease such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease, along with health care providers and women who are pregnant.

Are there any other ways to protect myself and my family against the flu?

Along with the flu shot, avoiding the spread of germs is very important. Wash your hands frequently, avoid contact with people affected with cold and flu and use a germ-killing disinfectant to clean surfaces.

How do I know which medication to choose?

When faced with cold or flu, medication should be selected carefully. Patients should first consult their physician or pharmacist to discuss their specific symptoms and review any existing health conditions and other medications they are currently taking.

Avoid medicines that treat symptoms you're not experienc-



Vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu—and in many states, flu shots can be administered by a pharmacist.

ing. *Analgesics* relieve aches and pains and reduce fever. *Antihistamines* help dry a runny nose and watery eyes and prevent postnasal drip. *Cough suppressants* quiet a cough and are advised for dry coughs when you aren't producing mucus. *Decongestants* reduce congestion in the nose and sinuses. *Expectorants* thin mucus so it can be coughed up more easily.

Are there any medications I should avoid?

If you take prescription medications, check with a pharmacist or physician to determine if there are any over-the-counter medications that should be avoided. Some medications may weaken or strengthen a prescription drug's effectiveness or can cause dangerous interactions.

Where can I get a flu shot?

MinuteClinic, the nation's leading retail health clinic located in select CVS/pharmacy locations, provides vaccinations administered by nurse practitioners with no appointments necessary. Many CVS/pharmacy stores will also host flu shot clinics this season. Contact your local health department, go to www.cvs.com or call (888) FLU-SHOT to find a flu shot clinic near you.