Get the Shot! Not the Flu!

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

Preventing Seasonal Flu

The first and most important step in preventing flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. CDC also recommends everyday preventive actions (like staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes and frequent handwashing) to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.

Flu Symptoms

Flu is different from a cold. People who are sick with flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:
- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

How Flu Spreads

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes.

Who should get the seasonal flu shot?

- Those 6 months of age and older.
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic health conditions.
- Healthcare workers
- People who live with those at high risk for the flu

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

1. **Get vaccinated**.
2. **Avoid close contact**. Avoid close contact with people who are sick
3. **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.
4. **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
5. **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.

Ask your doctor if the flu shot is right for you. If you get the flu shot from a Unitedhealthcare Community Plan doctor or healthcare provider, you will not have to pay any costs. If you go to your local Health Department, there may be a charge.

Resource: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/actions-prevent-flu.htm