

Healthy Lifestyle Can Reduce Our Exposure to Influenza

A Shortage of Vaccine Demands An Abundance of Common Sense

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Influenza (flu) not only results in discomfort and misery for 7 to 10 days, but it can also result in loss of work, reduction of income and other complications. Bronchitis associated with the flu can contribute to pneumonia and result in death. Although vaccinations aren't 100 percent effective, the flu shot is the best protection against the flu, according to public health experts. Many people that traditionally get a flu vaccination will not be able to this year because of a shortage of vaccine. However, vaccine is not our only protection against flu. Here are several common sense suggestions to help protect us from exposure to influenza when we are unable to get a vaccination.

Use Good Hand Hygiene

With a shortage of flu vaccines this year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reminds us one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of influenza is good hand hygiene. This means frequent and proper washing of hands with soap and water. And when soap and water is not readily available the CDC suggests the use of an effective and easy to use hand sanitizer like the alcohol-based Purell[®] Instant Hand Sanitizer.

Avoid Close Contact With Sick People

Try to minimize or eliminate shaking hands, drinking out of the same container, kissing or sharing eating utensils and the like.

Stay Home When You Are Sick

Do not come to work or attend school when you are truly sick. You will not only extend the length of your illness, but you will also increase others chances of getting sick.

Get Adequate Rest

Get at least 7 hours of uninterrupted sleep daily. Having adequate rest can help reduce stress and boost your immunity against influenza and other illnesses.

Drink Plenty of Water

Water is also extremely important; you should be drinking at least 6-8 glasses of water a day. Beer and sugared soft drinks are not a substitute for water.

Maintain a Balanced Diet

You should consume a balance of rice, meat, fruit and vegetables everyday. Also take 2 servings of fruit and 2 servings of vegetables daily.

Exercise Regularly

Regular exercise is important for keeping your body fit and healthy. You should exercise 3-5 times a week and for about 30 minutes per session.

Minimize Stress

Do not run your body down. You will make yourself more susceptible to viruses and colds.

Protect Others

Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. To prevent germs from spreading, you should cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or handkerchief when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, do not leave it lying around or others to contact. Dispose of it carefully and safely into an appropriate trash receptacle.

Wear Gloves When Cleaning

It is important that you wear appropriate gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that are commonly exposed to germs. Be careful not to expose yourself or others to germs on the outside of the gloves when removing contaminated gloves from hands.

Clean and Disinfect Contaminated Surfaces

Clean and disinfect environmental surfaces (floors, counters, toilets, urinals, walls, sinks etc.) with disinfectants that are EPA Registered effective against a broad spectrum of pathogenic microorganisms including influenza viruses.

Where can I find additional information about protecting myself from exposure to influenza and other disease causing germs?

The CDC has additional information on influenza on their website at www.cdc.org or you can call them at 800-311-3435. Or visit the Coastwide Laboratories website at www.coastwidelabs.com for additional articles about protecting our health, safety and environment.