

Ask *the* Expert

What should I know about the flu?

Flu season is upon us! If you haven't gotten your flu shot yet, it is not too late. Each flu season varies from the time of the year that people start becoming ill to the severity of the virus, as well as the length of the flu season. While flu activity may begin as early as October and continue into the month of May, the number of diagnosed flu cases most commonly peaks in the United States between December and February.

What is the flu?

The flu is a contagious illness that infects the nose, throat and lungs. This is caused by the influenza virus. The flu can be contagious for 5-7 days after becoming sick.

What are signs and symptoms of flu?

- fever
- cough
- body aches
- fatigue
- sore throat
- runny nose

Can I prevent the flu?

- Get vaccinated: The flu vaccine is highly recommended and the best way for prevention. The nasal spray vaccine is now available from ages 2 and up. Flu breakouts start as early as October and go into February. It takes up to two weeks for the antibodies to develop in your body, so it's best to get the. The earlier you can get the vaccine the better, however, it is not too late to get it now.
- Wash your hands. The flu virus can live for up to two hours on doorknobs, desks, phones, keyboards, and other surfaces. The best protection is to wash your hands frequently, using soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- Cover up. When you feel a sneeze or a cough coming on, don't just cover up your face with one or both hands. Grab a tissue and discard it immediately, and then wash your hands to avoid spreading anything contagious to others. In general, try to keep your hands away from your face. Your eyes, mouth, and nose are prime entry points for viruses you may inadvertently pick up.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Water and juice help your body eliminate toxins that have been filtered by your liver and kidneys. But don't drink alcohol—it can weaken your immune system as well as dehydrate you.
- Get some exercise. Aerobic exercise delivers more oxygen to your lungs and blood, and it helps your body pump more blood throughout your system. This will strengthen your ability to fight off infection.
- Get enough rest. If you're overtired or stressed, your immune system will suffer. Practice some relaxation exercises, such as meditation,

and get at least eight hours of sleep a night, especially when you're not feeling just right.

Why get vaccinated?

The flu can spread by coughing, sneezing or close contact with another person. Each year thousands die from the flu and many are hospitalized. The flu can lead to pneumonia and cause severe illness if not treated.

How can I learn more about the flu vaccination?

Ask your doctor or visit NEABaptist.com.

Flu shots are available at any NEA Baptist Clinic family practice location.

At the end of the day, no one wants to be diagnosed with the flu. People with flu can spread the virus before, during and after they are sick. It is never easy if the flu then spreads through your home or your workplace. If you do become ill, take the time to recover. In the meantime, protect yourself by getting your flu shot and taking precautions for flu prevention.



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Infectious Disease

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