

Protect Against the Flu

Be Responsible. Be Ready.

Flu season is here. Each year, more than 200,000 Americans end up in the hospital and 25,000 die from the flu. To protect yourself, take these steps.

Step 1 – Get your seasonal Flu Shot or FluMist each year

- It protects you from the most common flu germs.
- Almost everyone over the age of 6 months should get a flu shot or FluMist. Talk with your doctor if you are allergic to eggs.

Step 2 – Stay Healthy and Don't Spread Germs

- Stay home if you are sick. Help slow the spread of germs.
- Stay away from sick people if you can. Don't get too close.
- Wash your hands often with warm water and soap. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer also works.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or into the inside of your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Get plenty of sleep, manage stress, drink fluids, and eat healthy food.

Step 3 – Know Where to Go for More Information

- Keep your doctor's phone number near your phone.
- Know where you can go after-hours and on weekends if you need care. Make a list of nearby urgent care centers.
- For more information about the flu go to:
 - Howard County Health Department – www.hchealth.org
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – www.flu.gov

Sources: Community Emergency Response Network (CERN) of Howard County, Maryland, Howard County Government, Howard County Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Plan Ahead for the Flu Season

Each flu season is different. Sometimes we have a mild flu season and sometimes many more people get the flu and get sicker than usual. Planning ahead for a bad or long flu season makes good sense.

Here is a checklist to help you prepare

- Have a back-up plan for child care if schools and day care centers are closed.
- Ask your boss about plans for dealing with a bad flu season. What's your sick leave policy? Can you work from home?
- Plan how to get to work if buses or trains are not running.
- Check on your medicine supply. Do you have enough at home? Talk with your doctor to make sure you don't run out.
- Make sure you have enough health supplies at home.

Examples of medical, health and emergency supplies

- Medical supplies like glucose meters, strips
 - Fever-lowering drugs (like ibuprofen or acetaminophen)
 - Thermometer
 - Cough drops and cough medicine
 - Cleaning supplies that kill germs
 - Flashlight
 - Portable radio
 - Soap
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
 - Anti-diarrhea medicine
 - Throw-away surgical masks
 - Tissues, toilet paper, throw-away diapers
 - Batteries
 - Garbage bags
- Store a two-week supply of water and food. You may be too sick to shop or stores may be out of stock. During a bad flu season, you should buy extra supplies.

Examples of food and non-perishables

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, fruit, vegetables, beans and soups
- Dry cereal or granola
- Crackers
- Bottled water
- Pet food
- Protein or fruit bars
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Canned juices
- Canned or jarred baby food or formula
- Manual can opener