

**TeensHealth.org**

A safe, private place to get doctor-approved information on health, emotions, and life.

5 Ways to Fight the Flu

The flu is annoying enough on its own. So it doesn't help that flu season falls at one of the most exciting times of the year.

To avoid missing out on sports events, Halloween parties, Thanksgiving feasts, and holiday fun, follow these tips:

1. **Get the flu vaccine.** It's the best way to protect yourself against the flu. Getting vaccinated doesn't just protect your own health. It also helps the people around you because there's less chance you'll catch the flu and pass it on.
2. **Wash your hands often.** Hand washing is an important line of defense against germs like flu viruses. Why? The body takes about 2 weeks to build immunity after a flu vaccine — and even a vaccine isn't foolproof if a new strain of virus starts making the rounds. Hand washing also helps protect against other germs and illnesses that there aren't vaccines for, like the common cold.

Wash your hands after using the bathroom; after coughing or sneezing; before putting in or removing contact lenses; before using makeup; and before eating, serving, or preparing food. The great thing about hand washing is it's easy protection. So get in the habit of washing your hands when you come home from school, the mall, a movie, or anywhere else where you're around a lot of people.

3. **Keep your distance if someone is sick (coughing, sneezing, etc.).** Flu viruses travel through the air, so try to stay away from people who look sick. Of course, people who have the flu virus don't always look sick. That's where vaccines and hand washing come in.

It's also a good idea to avoid touching your nose, eyes, and mouth — three places where flu viruses can easily enter the body.

4. **Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow — not into your hands.** That way, you're not spreading the virus when you touch surfaces that other people may touch too.
5. **Stay home if you have the flu.** You don't want to pass your germs to someone else. Staying home is a great excuse to curl up and watch your favorite movie, play video games, or read. Rest can help the body recover faster.

You also can fight the flu on a daily basis by keeping your immune system strong. Some great immune boosters are:

- getting enough sleep
- eating healthy foods (including five or more servings of fruits and veggies a day!)
- drinking plenty of fluids
- getting regular exercise

Don't let the flu mess with your fall and winter fun. Fight back!

Reviewed by: Elana Pearl Ben-Joseph, MD

Date reviewed: September 2018

Note: All information on TeensHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

© 1995-2018 The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.

Images provided by The Nemours Foundation, iStock, Getty Images, Veer, Shutterstock, and Clipart.com.