



Your Company

# Family Caregiver Resources

Questions? Call Us!

[Your Phone Number]

Helpful tips for family caregivers in [Your Community Name]

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## Preventing Colds and Flu

### Preparing ahead of time



Did you know that 60% of people with flu symptoms leave the house during their illness? Furthermore, 70% of them go to the drugstore. That's a good reason to stay clear of the pharmacy during peak cold and flu season!

**Good preparation involves a lot more than a vaccine.** Cold and flu germs are highly contagious. If an infected person

sneezes, anyone within a three-foot radius is likely to get exposed. And those flu germs live up to 24 hours on hard surfaces. Not to mention that the sick person unwittingly starts spreading germs as early as three days BEFORE feeling any symptoms and continues to be contagious up to 24 hours after the natural break of a fever.

#### Tips for yourself and for your loved one

- **Get the flu vaccine.** Even if it's not a perfect match with this year's influenza virus, it will minimize the intensity of symptoms.
- **Get eight hours of sleep at night.** In one study, those who got fewer hours were three times more likely to catch a cold.
- **Wash hands often.** Touching hard surfaces (counters, doorknobs, the poles on public transit) is a sure-fire way to bring germs into your body.
- **Frequently clean surfaces** at home and at work.
- **Shy away from crowded situations.**

#### Avoid the pharmacy by stocking up ahead of time on

- soups, teas, and other fluids to keep well hydrated
- fever reducers: ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or aspirin
- saline drops or a neti pot to gently flush nasal passages
- honey and/or cough drops to soothe the throat
- decongestants (to dry up the nose), cough suppressants (for nighttime sleeping), expectorants (for daytime purging of mucus in the lungs). Consult with the doctor beforehand to be sure there are no conflicts with prescribed medicines
- lots of tissues. Don't keep used ones around
- humidifiers to ease breathing
- wedged pillows to sit (and sleep) more upright



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Elder Pages Online supports older adults in [Your Service Area] as they plan for their later years.

Give us a call at [Your Phone] to find out how we can support you.

## It's flu season



**Watch for symptoms.** Fever, body aches, chills, sore throat, headache, runny nose, cough, and fatigue.

**Why the flu shot is important.** Older adults represent up to 90% of those who die from the flu, especially if they have heart disease or COPD. Or if they live in a group setting.

### To prevent catching the flu,

- **get vaccinated each year,** ideally by October. Vaccines are remade yearly because the viruses change. Ask the doctor if your loved one should have the new "high-dose" flu vaccine for those over age 65.
- **avoid close contact with people who are sick,** especially anyone coughing or sneezing.
- **wash your hands often.** Use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available.
- **use tissue to cover a cough or sneeze.** Then throw the tissue away. Or, use the upper part of your sleeve.
- **avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**

These precautions are just as important for you as for your older family member.

### If you or your loved one has symptoms,

- **call the doctor.** An antiviral drug may be advised. These work best if taken soon after symptoms begin. Ask the doctor what symptoms require going to the Emergency Room.
- **stay home (except to get medical care).** Limit contact with others until symptom-free for 24 hours.
- **sleep, and drink fluids.** Broth, water, juice, and other noncaffeinated drinks are best.
- **get extra support.** Have someone stop by daily. Good self-care is difficult when illness strikes. That fresh perspective and extra pair of hands are important.

## Preventing pneumonia

Flu season means pneumonia season is right around the corner. Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that often develops after a cold or flu. As a general rule, pneumonia can be treated at home with prescribed medications and rest. That said, more than 50,000 people die each year from pneumonia, most of them older adults.

### Call the doctor if your loved one experiences

- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- fever of 102° or higher
- cough that won't go away (especially if it brings up yellow or green mucus)

### Prevention

- **Get the two pneumonia vaccines.** Each targets a different bacteria. They should be taken one year apart. Only 61% of older adults have received even one pneumonia vaccine. Talk to the doctor to learn what's needed to get current.
- **Get a yearly flu vaccine.** Avoiding influenza helps prevent pneumonia as well. The flu virus changes every year, so the vaccine should be updated.
- **WASH YOUR HANDS!** This is the single most important thing you can do.
- **Clean surfaces, doorknobs, and sink and toilet handles.** These household locations are where germs transfer from one person's hands to another.
- **Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.** Germs gathered by the hands enter the body through these mucus membranes.
- **Cough into a tissue or the sleeve of the upper arm.** Controlled coughing reduces the spray.
- **Limit contact with smoke.** Encourage your relative to stop smoking. Have others smoke outside.

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