

Tips to Protect Seniors During Flu Season

Influenza, otherwise known as the flu, is a common viral infection that many people face during the dreaded “flu season” that occurs typically from October until May. With symptoms including high fever, aching muscles, chills, sweating, headache, fatigue, nasal congestion, sore throat and dry coughing, this virus is no fun for anyone.

The [Mayo Clinic](#) states that much of the time, the flu and its symptoms will resolve itself with no help from a doctor, however there are some groups that are at a higher risk than others and should seek help from a doctor to protect themselves from further complications, such as bronchitis, heart problems, ear infections, asthma flare-ups, and worst of all, pneumonia, which can become deadly for seniors. Once seniors get infected there isn't much left to do but to rest and get plenty of fluids, however there's plenty that can be done to protect them from getting the flu in the first place. Try some of the following:

- **Get a flu shot.** Seniors, as well as anyone who comes into contact with the senior, should get a flu shot. These shots should be given to everyone, but especially to infants and seniors, as their risk for complications is higher. This can not only help the person receiving the shot to keep the infection away, but it will also help those who they are in contact with to not get infected. According to the [National Council on Aging](#) (NCOA), almost 58,000 hospitalizations were averted due to seniors getting a flu shot, making the quick trip to get the shot a little less inconvenient when you consider the lengthy hospital stay from complications.
- **Stay away from people who are sick.** This is just a good general rule of thumb. If you know anyone who is sick or may have the flu, try to keep them away until they are no longer contagious. In general, those infected are contagious for 5 to 7 days. If family or friends may be coming to your home to visit, kindly request that they refrain from visiting and call instead if they are sick. If you live in a senior living community, try to stay out of crowded areas and refrain from eating meals at busy times, as this may increase the risk of getting sick.
- **If seniors are sick, they should stay home.** According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC), the infection can be passed onto someone else before the senior even knows they are sick and especially when they are sick. As hard as it can be, if you think you may have been exposed or may be getting sick, try to stay home. Reschedule any appointments, don't go to any fitness classes – try exercising at home instead! – and don't meet up with friends or family. Everyone will understand, and most likely be glad, because they don't want to get sick either.
- **Wash hands & clean often.** Because the virus can be spread to others who are about 6 feet away, according to the CDC, it's important to wash your hands and other commonly used surfaces. It's mainly known that droplets from when people cough, sneeze or talk are the main way that people get infected with the flu, but it's also believed that touching surfaces or objects that others who are sick have touched and then touching the mouth or nose can also spread the sickness. Soap and water will work just fine, but if this is not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub, says the CDC.



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