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Share the Wellness Tip

Get Out And Get Your Flu Shot

Now that fall is here, it's time to gear up for flu season. In fact, some viruses are already spreading. Hospitals in Missouri and Illinois are seeing more children than usual with severe respiratory illness caused by enterovirus D68. And, the virus isn't just in two states, officials in 10 states are reporting cases of respiratory illness, some severe enough to send children to hospitals.

This particular type of enterovirus — EV-D68 — is uncommon, but not new. Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) is one of many non-polio enteroviruses which collectively cause about 10 to 15 million infections in the United States each year. Although this virus cannot be prevented by a vaccine, you can take steps to help protect yourself from other illnesses, like the flu.

In some cases, if you get sick with the flu, you are more likely to develop pneumonia, especially for those with a chronic disease like heart failure or heart disease. Pneumonia is a serious lung infection. It makes the heart and lungs work harder to move oxygen around the body. Getting pneumonia could land you in the hospital.

To stay healthy, start with these steps:

-  Don't skip your flu shot this fall. The best time is September through early November, before flu season starts. But it still helps to get a shot even in December, January, or later. The shot is safe and will help to protect you and even others around you.
-  Ask your doctor if you need a pneumonia vaccination. If you are at risk, your doctor might recommend a pneumonia vaccination. You can get one at any time of the year. Most people need only one shot. Some people may need a booster shot after five years.
-  Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
-  Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk.
-  Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; USA Today, September 9, 2014

