

The Flu is Here!

Flu season is in full swing. During week 52 (December 24-30, 2017), influenza activity increased sharply in the United States, including Colorado and Durango. Flu is especially dangerous for older people, very young children and people with other chronic illnesses such as chronic heart and lung disease. Complications including pneumonia can be fatal. Flu has touched our UUF community with pneumonia requiring hospitalization. Common flu symptoms are fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headaches, fatigue.

What Can You Do to Protect Yourself and Others Around You?

1. If you have not already done so, get your flu shot. The shot is widely available at drug stores, supermarket pharmacies and doctor's offices. The best way to prevent the flu is with a [flu shot](#). CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine each year by the end of October if possible. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue throughout flu season, even in January or later. Vaccination is especially important for people 65 years and older because they are at [high risk](#) for complications from flu. The flu shot is vital for those who care for others such as homemakers, childcare providers, healthcare workers, teachers etc.
2. Practice good health habits including covering coughs, washing hands often, and avoiding people who are sick. If people in your house are ill, wipe down commonly touched surfaces with a household cleaner or disinfectant.
3. Stay away from others if you are ill. Do not come to church. Before going to the doctor, call for advice. Same with your employer.
4. Seek medical advice quickly if you develop flu symptoms to see whether you might need medical evaluation or treatment with [antiviral drugs](#) such as Tamiflu or Relenza (not to be confused with the flu vaccine). If taken early after onset of symptoms, these drugs can lessen the severity and prevent complications of flu.
5. Get pneumococcal vaccines ("pneumonia shot"). In addition to annual flu vaccination, people who are 65 years of age and older should also be up to date with [pneumococcal vaccination](#) to protect against pneumococcal (a bacterial) disease, such as pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections. Talk to your doctor to find out which pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for you. Pneumococcal pneumonia is an example of a serious [flu-related complication](#) that can cause death. You can get the pneumococcal vaccine your provider recommends when you get the flu vaccine.