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Live Well, Work Well

Shapiro INSURANCE GROUP

What to Know About This Year's Flu Season

Influenza (flu) season lasts from October through May in the United States, with peak flu activity between December and March. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the timing and duration of flu activity have been unpredictable. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported early increases in seasonal flu last year. The Southern Hemisphere also experienced an early surge of flu activity this year, which may indicate what's to come in the United States.

Furthermore, health experts anticipate another wave of respiratory viral infections this fall, namely from the flu, the virus that causes COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Fortunately, vaccines for all three viruses will be available for the first time in the fall. Vaccinations have been shown to reduce hospitalizations and death and may be particularly beneficial for those with compromised health.

People vaccinated against the flu last season were about **40% to 70% less likely** to be hospitalized because of flu illness or related complications, according to the CDC.

Tips for Staying Healthy

The flu can cause serious complications for people of any age, but children and older adults are especially vulnerable. To help keep your household healthy this flu season, consider the following suggestions:

- Get vaccinated. Being vaccinated against the flu is your best chance of preventing the illness. The CDC recommends that anyone 6 months and older get a flu shot every year. The flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same visit.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, and stay away from others when you feel unwell. Because flu and COVID-19 symptoms are similar, doctors say it's best to get tested to know what you have.
- Wash your hands often using soap and warm water to protect against germs. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes to prevent the spread of germs.
- Sleep well, stay active and drink plenty of water to keep your immune system strong.
- Eat a nutritious diet of healthy grains, fruits, vegetables and fiber.

September and October are the best months to get vaccinated against the flu, so don't delay getting your shot. Contact your doctor today to learn more about vaccines.

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Where Are the Germiest Places?

Germs are a part of life—and they're everywhere. The dry air associated with fall and winter also makes it easier for germs to spread and linger in the air. Here are some germ hot spots:

- **Home**—Remote controls, kitchen counters, bathroom fixtures and handles, sponges and toothbrush holders
- **Workplace**—Desktops, keyboard, mouse, chair armrests, writing tools, handles, switches and doorknobs
- **School**—Water fountains, doorknobs, desks and tables, shared school supplies, cafeterias and playgrounds

Hand-washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs, especially after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.

Stocking a Nutritious Kitchen

You don't need to master the art of meal planning to eat well during the week. It can be as simple as stocking your kitchen with mealtime building blocks. Consider keeping these nutritious pantry, fridge and freezer staples on hand to make healthy eating easy:

- **Canned chickpeas** can easily be added to soups or mashed with seasonings for extra protein and fiber.
- **Chicken breast** is a great protein to build a meal around. You could make pasta, soups, casseroles, sandwiches and more.
- **Extra-firm tofu** is full of plant-based protein and calcium. Its neutral flavor makes it great for stir-fries and curries.
- **Quinoa or lentils** are versatile options to round off meals. They are packed with fiber and protein.
- **Whole-wheat spaghetti** is a great last-minute meal idea. It has a sizable dose of fiber and helps reduce cholesterol.
- **Frozen spinach** can easily go in egg dishes, pasta or smoothies. It is packed with four times the nutrients of fresh spinach.

With these healthy basics on hand, you can toss together nutritious meals that require minimal effort.

Leafy Tofu

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients

1 package tofu
1 Tbsp. oil
4 cups fresh spinach
2 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tsp. toasted sesame seeds

Preparations

1. Drain the tofu. Dice it into 1-inch cubes.
2. Tear the spinach into bite-sized pieces.
3. In a large pan, heat the oil and saute the tofu cubes for a few minutes. Move the tofu to the center of the pan.
4. Add the spinach and soy sauce. Mix.
5. Cover the pan and cook until the spinach is wilted.
6. Sprinkle on the sesame seeds.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total calories	77
Total fat	5 g
Protein	7 g
Sodium	216 mg
Carbohydrate	2 g
Dietary fiber	1 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Total sugars	1 g

Source: MyPlate