



Covenant Connections

Covenant Health News and Community Events

How to Avoid the Flu This Season

The best way to avoid the flu? Get a flu shot. There are other steps you can take, of course, like washing your hands, staying away from people who are sick, eating right and getting plenty of rest. But the best way to protect yourself and your family is to get a flu shot.

What Is the Flu and How Does It Spread?

"The flu is caused by several different strains of the influenza virus, which is a highly contagious virus spread primarily by droplets when we touch surfaces or breathe air that has been contaminated," said Mark Browne, MD, Covenant Health senior vice president and chief medical officer. "So when people cough, sneeze, or talk, the flu virus can spread up to six or seven feet away."

"The flu is also spread by touch," Dr. Browne said, noting that the virus can live for up to two hours on "high-touch" surfaces such as towel bars, door handles and computer keyboards.



Mark Browne, MD

Why Do I Need a Flu Shot Every Year?

Anywhere from one in 20 to one in five people in the U.S. get the flu each year. "Flu season" starts as early as October and typically extends through May. Flu viruses continually change, and the flu vaccine is updated annually in anticipation of those changes - that's why you need an annual flu shot. The flu vaccine takes about two weeks to take

effect and provides protection for up to a year. You cannot get the flu from a flu shot.

"The Centers for Disease Control recommends a flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older," Dr. Browne noted. "The vaccine not only helps prevent you from getting this year's most prevalent flu strains, but if you do come down with the flu, it is likely to be a milder case."

Some people should not get a flu vaccination, such as those who have had severe allergic reactions to the vaccine in the past. Talk to your healthcare provider to determine if there is a reason you should not receive the vaccine.

Is It a Cold or Is It the Flu?

A common cold will subside after a few days, while flu symptoms may persist for several weeks. Flu symptoms include a sudden onset of:

- Fever
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache and/or body aches
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children)

Dr. Browne explained that flu typically lasts from one to two weeks and can range from a mild case to being life-threatening, especially among older adults or those with chronic diseases.

What Should I Do if I Get the Flu?

If you do get sick with the flu, antiviral drugs are a treatment option. They are different than antibiotics, which fight bacterial infections, not viruses. Antiviral

Tips to Prevent the Spread of Influenza

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Avoid touching** your face, eyes, nose or mouth as you go through your day.
- **Follow your doctor's orders.** Influenza is a virus and does not respond to antibiotics. However, your doctor may prescribe anti-viral drugs, which can make the illness milder and shorten the time you are sick.
- **Stay home if you are ill.** If you are sick with flu-like illness, the Centers for Disease Control recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after you are fever-free without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- **Take care of yourself.** In addition to a flu vaccination, hand washing, and other preventive actions, make sure you are eating nutritious foods, drinking plenty of fluids and getting adequate rest.



drugs are not a substitute for getting the vaccine and should be considered a second line of defense after you have gotten your flu shot.

"For people at high risk of flu, early treatment with these medications can mean having a milder course of the illness and may even prevent hospitalization," Dr. Browne said.

The Best Advice This Flu Season?

Follow the CDC's recommendation to "Take Three":

- 1- Take time to get a flu vaccination.
- 2- Take simple everyday actions (like hand washing and covering your mouth) to stop the spread of germs.
- 3- Take antiviral medications if your doctor prescribes them.

Need a Flu Shot?

Flu shots are available on a walk-in basis at these Covenant Medical Group clinics:

Convenient Care Downtown

418 S. Gay St., Suite 103, Knoxville
Walk-in hours: Mon.-Thurs. 8 a.m.-6 p.m.; Fri. 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

FamilyCare Specialists

1300 Old Wesigarber Road, Knoxville
Walk-in hours: Mon.-Fri. 7 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sat. 8 a.m.-noon

Fort Loudoun Primary Care

423 Medical Park Drive, Suite 100, Lenoir City
Walk-in hours: Mon.-Fri. 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

It's Almost Time!

New Parkwest Tower Opens Next Month

Parkwest Medical Center's \$99 million expansion and renovation project includes a new patient care tower, additional operating rooms, a dedicated entrance for surgical patients, a clinical observation unit for medical and surgical patients and relocating the helipad closer to the emergency department. This will help the Parkwest staff and physicians better serve patients who need to be observed in the hospital but do not need to be admitted as inpatients.

Fort Sanders Regional to Open Expanded Emergency Services in 2020

In 2018 Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center launched a \$115 million expansion projected to increase the capacity to provide emergency services and critical care at Knoxville's only downtown hospital by 50 percent. The new emergency department will open in early 2020 and the expanded critical care area will be completed in 2021.

The project also includes the addition of 400 spaces in the Laurel Ave. parking garage.



The new tower at Parkwest Medical Center will feature two patient floors dedicated to orthopedics and spine care.



Fort Sanders Regional's construction project will expand emergency and critical care services.



Welcome, New Physician

M. Wendell Lawson, MD

Cardiovascular Disease
Cardiology Associates of East Tennessee
Parkwest Medical Center

For appointments or information about physicians affiliated with Covenant Health, call 865-541-4500.



IN RECOGNITION OF VETERANS DAY,
WE HONOR ALL WHO HAVE SERVED
IN OUR U.S. ARMED FORCES.

Thank You.