



**American
Red Cross**

2 Maitland Street
Concord NH, 03301
603-225-6697
1-800-464-6692
Fax: 603-228-7171

Contact: Lisa Michaud
Chief Community/External
Relations Officer
Phone: 603-545-8038
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News Release NEWS RELEASE

Red Cross Urges Everyone To Get Their Flu Shot Now *For immediate release*

CONCORD, NH, January 9, 2013 — Widespread flu activity is being reported across much of the **country and** the American Red Cross urges people who have not yet gotten a flu vaccine to get vaccinated now.

The Red Cross also has steps people can take to prevent the spread of the flu virus during what [the Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) says is the worst influenza outbreak in several years in the United States.

Widespread flu activity is reported in 41 states - Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

[STEPS TO PREVENT FLU](#) The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting someone against flu viruses. In addition to getting vaccinated, the Red Cross has some simple steps people can take to help prevent the spread of the flu virus. Parents can also practice these things with their kids to help keep them well:

- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue away after use. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into the elbow, not the hands.
- Wash hands often, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand-rub.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if sick.

SIGNS OF THE FLU How does someone know they have the flu? The common **signs of influenza are high fever, severe body aches, headache, being extremely tired, sore throat, cough, runny or stuffy nose, and vomiting and/or diarrhea (more common in children).**

If someone in the household does come down with the flu, the Red Cross wants everyone to know the best way to care for them:

- Designate one person as the caregiver and have the other household members avoid close contact with that person so they won't become sick.
- Make sure the person stays at home and rests until 24 hours after the fever is gone.
- Designate a sick room for the person if possible. If there is more than one sick person, they can share the sick room if needed. If there is more than one bathroom, designate one for those who are sick to use. Give each sick person their own drinking glass, washcloth and towel.

- Keep the following either in the sick room or near the person: tissues, a trash can lined with a plastic trash bag, alcohol-based hand rub, a cooler or pitcher with ice and drinks, a thermometer and a cup with straw or squeeze bottle to help with drinking. A humidifier will provide extra moisture, making it easier for the sick person to breathe. Sick people should wear a facemask, if available, when they leave the sick room or are around others.
- Give plenty of liquids (water and other clear liquids) at the first sign of flu and continue throughout the illness. People with the flu need to drink extra fluids to keep from getting dehydrated.
- Treat fever and cough with medicines that can be purchased at the store. Remember, when children are ill they should never be given aspirin or products containing aspirin - especially with the flu.
- If the person gets very sick, is pregnant or has a medical condition (like asthma) that puts them at higher risk of flu complications, call their doctor. They may need to be examined and might need antiviral medicine to treat the flu.
- Keep everyone's personal items separate. All household members should avoid sharing pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils unless cleaned between uses.
- Disinfect doorknobs, switches, handles, computers, telephones, bedside tables, bathroom sinks, toilets, counters, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.
- Wash everyone's dishes in the dishwasher or by hand using very hot water and soap.
- Wash everyone's clothes in a standard washing machine. Use detergent and very hot water, tumble dry on a hot dryer setting and wash hands after handling dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves when in contact with or cleaning up body fluids.

CALL THE DOCTOR If someone thinks they have the flu, their health-care provider should be consulted. Seek medical care immediately if the person develops any of the following symptoms:

- Fast breathing, trouble breathing or bluish skin color.
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen (adults).
- Confusion or sudden dizziness.
- Not drinking enough fluids, not being able to eat, or severe or persistent vomiting.
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- Not waking up, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held or not interacting (children).
- Fever with a rash (children).
- No tears when crying or significantly fewer wet diapers than normal (children).

More information about how to help protect loved ones during this flu season is available on redcross.org.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit redcross.org/nh or call us at 1-800-464-6692. Contributions may also be sent to the American Red Cross in New Hampshire at P.O. Box 2528, Concord, NH 03302-2528. Please consider joining us as we empower others to prepare, prevent and respond to emergencies.

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