

## A Flu Fighter's Checklist: Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Chances of Getting the Flu

**1.** Wash your hands frequently! Hand contact is one of the principal ways the influenza virus finds its way into your system. Wash hands vigorously for 10 -20 seconds, paying attention to the areas between the fingers and on the backs of the hands. Use hot water and rinse in a steady stream. Particularly if you're in a public lavatory, dry your hands before you shut the water off, using the towel to turn the tap off. If there is a blow dryer, activate with your elbow.



**2.** An antiviral drug is an option for those who should not get an influenza vaccine. Consult your doctor. Both amantadine and rimantadine have been shown to be safe and effective - about 70 to 80 percent - in reducing both the severity as well as the duration of influenza A, one of the three flu viruses. These prescription drugs can be taken as a preventive measure. They can also be taken as a remedy should flu symptoms appear; treatment must start within 48 hours of the first signs, however. Consult your physician before taking any medication.

**3.** Eat a balanced diet, get proper amounts of sleep, and exercise regularly.

**4.** Educate your family and coworkers about the flu and its effects. There's safety in numbers, so make sure those around you understand about the flu and its potential effects.

**5.** Ensure that high-risk family members and coworkers are vaccinated, such as the elderly, children with asthma, and individuals with chronic lung or liver disease, diabetes, heart or kidney ailments, or chronic anemia. Include also those undergoing treatment for cancer and those who have compromised immune systems.

**6.** Keep your distance. If you must be in the same room with individuals infected with the flu, try to limit your time there to one hour maximum, and keep your distance - six feet minimum. If you need to get closer than that, be careful not to stand in the path of coughs and sneezes. Limit such close contacts to just a few minutes.

Additional advice that those of you who get *The State* newspaper may have noted in a recent edition includes these specifics from Elizabeth Quinn, an exercise physiologist:

- \* Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth (mucous membranes) unless you have washed your hands; viruses spread more easily via contaminated surfaces than through the air.
- \* Frequently wipe off steering wheels, telephones, keyboards, and common-use office equipment that multiple people touch.
- \* Drink extra water; it's easy to get dehydrated even though temperatures may be cooler. Often indoor temperatures are warmer with dry heat than other times of year.