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### **Flu Prevention: What You Need to Know**

A few years ago, during the Christmas holiday, my sister and her family had to stay at home with a sick child who had the flu. It was a disappointment to my mom and the rest of the family, as she and her family live a few hours away. The following year, my sister made sure to get the kids vaccinated; they didn't want to miss out on the family gathering.

As we head toward cooler weather and fall settles in, so does the annual flu season. It is important that you take steps now to protect yourself and your family from the flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone older than 6 months be vaccinated against the flu. The flu vaccination can help keep you and your family healthy.

While Flu vaccines may not completely prevent you from becoming sick, they can reduce the severity of illness, complications, and hospitalizations. Vaccines are particularly important for older adults 65+, pregnant and postpartum individuals, and people with chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and weakened immune systems.

Flu season usually peaks between December and February. Immunity from the vaccination usually kicks in two weeks after vaccination. So now is the time to get your shot if you haven't already done so. Flu shots are available at pharmacies and local health departments. Most insurance will cover the cost of the shot.

You should take additional steps to prevent the flu.

- Make sure to wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Don't go out and about if you are sick; try to keep your germs to yourself.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly.

If you do get sick, contact your healthcare provider; they may be able to prescribe an antiviral medication to help shorten the duration of your illness.

Don't get caught off guard this flu season. Get vaccinated and practice good hygiene.