

Flu Cases Continue to Rise in Connecticut – What You Can Do to Protect Yourself

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RVNAhealth Offers Flu Shots and Practical Tips to Keep You Healthy

Flu activity across the country continues to increase. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), cases of the flu rose sharply over the last two weeks, and are twice as high as the same time period last year. As of the first week in January (the most recent data available), 49 states had widespread flu activity, including Connecticut. All eight counties in the state are experiencing flu, with Hartford and Fairfield counties reporting the highest number of cases.

Characterized by the sudden onset of symptoms such as fever and/or chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headaches, and body aches, the flu is not something to take lightly. If not treated promptly, it can result in complications, including pneumonia and bronchitis, and may lead to hospitalization, even for otherwise healthy people. What's also important to remember is that symptoms can vary greatly from person to person, and may not follow the expected pattern. In children, for example, vomiting and diarrhea may occur.

What can you do to protect yourself? "The flu shot, though not foolproof, is still your best defense," says April Rodríguez, RN, Community Health Nurse Manager for RVNA. While it's true that you may still come down with the flu even after getting the shot, it doesn't mean that there's no benefit. Having the vaccine can result in milder symptoms and a shorter duration of illness if you do get sick. Plus, having the flu shot can also help protect those around you who are more vulnerable, such as small children and the elderly.

Beyond the flu shot, RVNAhealth nurses recommend other common-sense steps to keep yourself and those around you healthy:

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth without washing your hands first. This is a common way germs are spread.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.
- Get plenty of rest and eat a healthy diet.

If you come down with flu-like symptoms, seek medical attention and be careful around others. You can spread it for as long as a week after you're sick. To help contain the spread, follow these tips:

- Limit your contact with other people as much as possible while you're sick.
- Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (except to get medical care).
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and wash your hands immediately. Even better, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.

The good news is that there's still time to get a flu shot and benefit from the protection it provides.

RVNAhealth offers flu shots at its Center for Exceptional Care, 27 Governor Street in Ridgefield. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 203-438-5555


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