



## Flu Season is Here!

### Tips to Avoid Getting the Flu

Flu Season is here so be sure to protect yourself against the flu bug! Here are five easy ways to prevent getting the flu:



**1. Wash your hands.** That's right, washing your hands with soap in warm water for 20 seconds kills flu germs. Dry your hands with a paper towel then throw the towel away.

**2. Don't touch your face.** Germs can be on counter tops, towels, handrails or other people. If you touch a germ then touch your face, you can catch the flu. It enters the body through your nose or mouth, so keep your fingers away.

**3. Avoid people that are sick.** Teach children to cough into their elbow and use paper towels to dry their hands and face when they are sick. This will reduce the spread of the virus.

**4. Don't share stuff.** Sharing isn't always a good thing—especially when it comes to cups, utensils, phones and other objects that can spread flu germs.

**5. Stay well rested and hydrated.** If your body is tired or does not get enough fluids, it has to work harder to fight off germs. Get extra rest if you are starting to feel tired.

**6. Stay home if you start to feel sick.** If you feel sick, you probably are. Listen to your body. Stay home and rest.

### Should I get the flu shot?

Getting the flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the flu. The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention generally recommends that people at a high risk for complications from the flu should get the flu shot.

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### Check Out the Molina Healthcare Website

Check out the Molina Healthcare website at [www.MolinaHealthcare.com](http://www.MolinaHealthcare.com). You can use the Internet for free at most public libraries. Click on the "Member" button and drag your mouse down to your state. You can get information on our website about:

- Molina Healthcare's contracted providers and hospitals
- Your benefits
- What to do if you get a bill or a claim
- FAQs (frequently asked questions and answers)
- Preferred drug list (approved drugs that providers can prescribe)
- How to contact a Nurse to help you with your health care
- How to get primary care, hospital, specialty, and emergency services
- How to get care after normal office hours
- Preventive health guidelines and immunization schedule
- Your rights and responsibilities and the privacy of your information
- Restrictions on benefits or how to obtain care outside the Molina Healthcare service area
- Quality Improvement, Health Education, and Disease Management programs
- How to voice a complaint or appeal a medical decision
- How we decide about using new technology

You can ask for printed copies of anything posted on the website by calling **1-800-642-4168**. Your member handbook is also a good resource. You can find it on our website.

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## Questions about your health?

Call Our Nurse Advice Line!

1-888-275-8750 (English)  
1-866-648-3537 (Español/Spanish)

**OPEN 24 HOURS!**

Your family's health is our priority!

For the hearing impaired please call  
TTY/866-735-2929 English  
TTY/866-833-4703 Spanish

## Flu Season is Here! *Continued...*

These people include:

- Children aged 6 months through 18 years of age
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes
- People who live in nursing homes or other long term care facilities.
- People who care for those at high risk for complications from the flu
- People who have household contact with those at high risk for complications from the flu
- Day care workers of children 6 months of age or younger. The children are too young to be vaccinated so we need to reduce the risk of passing the virus to them.
- Healthcare workers

Some people think the flu shot gives you the flu. This is not true. Please talk with your provider to see if the flu shot is right for you.

### What can I do for myself if I get the flu?

Stay home and take good care of yourself when you are sick. Eat well and drink fluids to stay hydrated. Try drinking water and making yourself soup. Popsicles are another way to help children stay hydrated. You should also get plenty of rest. Over-the-counter medicines may be used to reduce fever, aches and pains. If you have other medical conditions or take other medicines, ask your provider or call a nurse before taking additional medicines.

Remember, the flu is a virus. That means antibiotics won't cure it. Antibiotics fight illness caused by bacteria. They don't work against things usually caused by viruses like colds, the flu, or most coughs and sore throats.

**You may call Molina's Nurse Advice Line at any time 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to get more information or ask questions. The phone number is on the back of your member card (1-888-275-8750 English; 1-866-648-3537 Spanish).**

## Purposes of CVD Tests

**Cardiovascular disease (CVD)** is a broad term that describes diseases of the heart and blood vessels. Blood tests can check the state of your CVD. It can also tell how well your treatment plan is working.

**C-reactive protein (CRP)** is one test. CRP is made by your liver when there is inflammation in your body. Inflammation plays a part in atherosclerosis. This is when fatty deposits clog your arteries. High levels of CRP are linked to a higher risk of heart attack and stroke.

**A lipid panel** tests the amount of fat in your blood. It is also called a cholesterol test. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) carries cholesterol from your liver to the rest of your body. Too much LDL means fatty deposits end up in your arteries. This can lead to plaques and reduce blood flow. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) carries cholesterol back to your liver so your body can get rid of it. A high HDL level is a good thing. Triglycerides are another type of fat in the blood. High levels raise your risk of heart disease. Total cholesterol means a sum of your blood's cholesterol.

**Brain natriuretic peptide (BNP)** is made by your heart and blood vessels. It acts as a messenger to your kidneys. It tells your kidneys that it is okay to get rid of sodium. Your body will secrete high levels of BNP into your blood when your heart is damaged. BNP levels can tell the progress of heart failure treatment.

Knowing a little bit about these tests is a good way to take part in managing your CVD.

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## Medications

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a broad term that describes diseases of the heart and blood vessels. There are many different types of medicine for CVD. Here are some common types of drugs and how they work.

### Anticoagulants

Two common types are heparin and warfarin. These drugs prevent clots from forming in your veins. They also keep existing clots from getting larger. Clots can block blood flow and cause serious problems. Heparin is given by injection. It is fast acting. Warfarin is given orally. It is longer acting. These drugs prevent blood from clotting. Therefore, you must take precautions to protect yourself from cuts or bruises.

### Antiplatelets

These types of drugs prevent clots from forming in your arteries. Aspirin is an antiplatelet. It keeps the platelets in your blood from sticking together. Low dose aspirin can help prevent heart attacks and strokes. But there is an increased risk of bleeding in your digestive system.

### Nitroglycerin

Nitrates are used to treat angina. Angina is chest pain. Nitrates can come in a pill, cream, patch, or tablet or spray used under the tongue. They cause your blood vessels to relax. That way, enough oxygen can get to your heart and stop the pain. Make sure to check the expiration date on your nitroglycerin. It doesn't last as long as other drugs. It is also sensitive to light. Be sure to keep it in the container it came in. Common side effects are headache, dizziness and flushing on the face and neck.

### Beta Blockers

These drugs help reduce high blood pressure. They make your heart beat slower and less forcefully. Non-selective beta blockers can narrow the airways in your lungs. People with asthma or COPD should not use these types of beta blockers. Common side effects are fatigue and dizziness.

### Calcium Channel Blockers (CCBs)

CCBs are used to treat high blood pressure and angina. Calcium causes the heart to beat faster. It also causes blood vessels to tighten. If calcium is blocked, the heart will beat slower, and blood vessels will relax. Common side effects are dizziness, facial flushing and headache.

### ACE Inhibitors

This class of drugs prevents your arteries from narrowing. It also keeps your kidneys from holding onto sodium. The

result is a drop in blood pressure. An uncommon side effect is a dry cough.

### Cholesterol Lowering Drugs

Your body gets cholesterol from the food you eat. Your body also makes its own cholesterol. Sometimes there is too much cholesterol in your blood. This can clog blood vessels. Drugs that lower cholesterol work in different ways. Some keep your body from absorbing it. Some help your body eliminate it. Others lower the LDL cholesterol. This is sometimes called the "bad cholesterol." Either way, you still need to be careful about how much saturated fat you eat.

It's important to understand about the medicine you take. Be sure to talk to your health care provider if you have any questions.

## Less Salt, More Fluid

If you have cardiovascular disease (CVD), limiting your salt intake is important. CVD is a broad term that describes diseases of the heart and blood vessels. High blood pressure and heart failure are two examples. Water follows salt. When you eat or drink things with sodium in them, that salt gets into your blood stream. Water will follow to try to dilute the salt content. Now your heart has to work harder to pump a larger volume of fluid.

Too much salt can cause swelling, shortness of breath and weight gain. Most people should get less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day. But if you have heart failure, the recommended sodium intake is no more than 2,000 milligrams per day.

The American Heart Association recommends the following for reducing sodium intake:

- Take the salt shaker off the table.
- Cook without salt.
- Avoid salty seasonings like bouillon cubes and soy sauce.
- Cook with low-salt seasonings like lemon juice, vinegar and herbs.
- Drain and rinse canned foods before using them.

Besides limiting salt intake, staying hydrated is also important. For some forms of CVD like heart failure, your doctor might recommend limiting how much fluid you get. Most doctors recommend eight cups a day. This includes fluids like water, juice and ice cubes and foods such as yogurt, ice cream and fruit. Watch out for caffeinated beverages like coffee, black tea and some sodas. Caffeine is a stimulant. It can put more stress on your heart.