

Get the Facts About the Flu and the Flu Vaccine

What is the flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus that infects the nose, throat, and lungs. It spreads through droplets when someone coughs, sneezes, or talks. You can get the flu by touching an object with the virus on it and then touching your face. Most people contract the flu when droplets land directly in their mouth or nose. Symptoms of the flu usually come on quickly, unlike the common cold, which develops gradually. Common symptoms of the flu last for up to two weeks. It can be mild or very serious and can even be fatal. The flu season usually peaks between January and March.

Symptoms

- Fever and chills (please note that not everyone will develop a fever; you can have the flu without a fever)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Some people, especially children, experience vomiting and diarrhea
- Some people will be weak and tired for several weeks

Treatment

- Antiviral drugs can be used
- Home remedies can help relieve symptoms
 - Drink more fluids
 - Warm showers, warm compresses
 - Nasal strips
 - Humidifiers
- Over-the-counter decongestants, cough suppressants, and fever-reducing medications can also offer relief
- Antibiotics treat bacterial infections and are not effective against the flu, which is a virus



Why should you get the flu shot?

Getting the flu vaccine is the single most important thing that you can do to prevent getting ill from the flu.

- Helps keep you from getting the flu
- Makes the flu less severe
- Prevents complications and death from the flu

Contrary to rumors, you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. The vaccine causes no side effects in most people.

Taking Care of Yourself When You are a Caregiver

Informal caregivers (family and friends) provide 80% of long-term care in the United States. Many caregivers don't think of themselves as a caregiver. But a caregiver is anyone who helps someone in need; this person might be an ill spouse or partner, a disabled child, or an aging relative. Caregiving can make you feel good because you're able to help someone, but it is normal to feel angry, frustrated, exhausted, lonely, or sad at times.

Signs of caregiver stress:

- Feeling sad
- Feeling overwhelmed or always worried
- Feeling tired most of the time
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Becoming easily irritated or angry
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Having frequent headaches, pain, or other physical problems
- Abusing alcohol or drugs, including prescription medications

Things that you can do to ease caregiver stress:

- Eat a balanced diet
- Accept help from others
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day whenever you can. You can break this up into three sessions that are each ten minutes long
- Drink plenty of water
- Keep your medication and supplements in a pill container in your bag so that they are always with you.
- Set up a sleep routine that allows you to get 7 hours of sleep a night
- Get your regular checkups and medical testing, no matter how busy you are
- Set realistic goals, and don't beat yourself up if you don't achieve them all
- Come up with a plan for when you're sick
- Journaling can be an excellent outlet
- Identify some stress reducers for you, and try to work them into your schedule
- Prioritize the things that matter most
- Find out if there are social services in your area, such as transportation or mail delivery, that could help out the person that you're caring for



Telehealth

Telehealth is a safe and effective way for you to see a doctor from your home. You can speak to a doctor via smart phone, tablet or computer-enabled web cam. We encourage you to use telehealth if it is available in your plan. Telehealth doesn't replace your primary care doctor, but it can be helpful if you need to talk to a doctor and cannot make it into a doctor's office.



Telehealth can be useful during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain continuity of care. This can help avoid delaying preventative, chronic or routine care. It can also benefit those who are vulnerable or at-risk.

Beginning in 2021, THP will be offering additional telehealth services on Medicare Advantage plans.

Preventing Falls

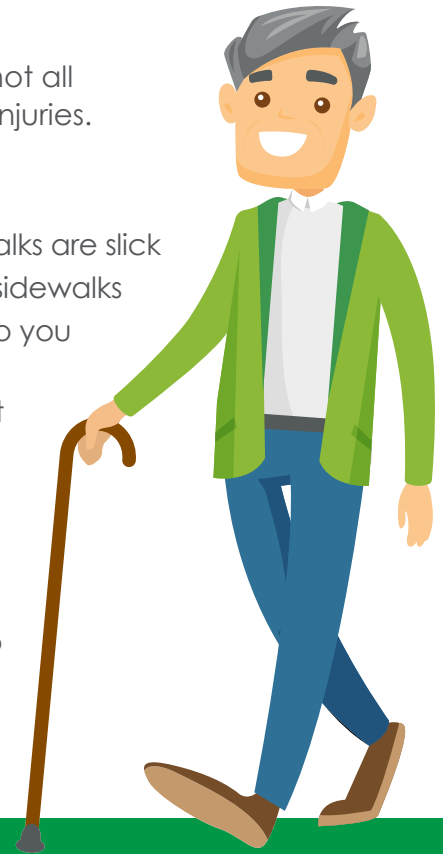
Every year, more than one in four older adults experience a fall. While not all falls cause injuries, some can be serious and result in fractures or head injuries. Falls can be prevented. Some tips to reduce your risk of falling include:

When indoors

- Keep rooms free of clutter, especially on floors
- Use plastic or carpet runners
- Wear low-heeled shoes
- Do not walk in socks, stockings, or slippers
- Be sure rugs have skid-proof backs or are tacked to the floor
- Be sure stairs are well lit and have rails on both sides
- Put grab bars on bathroom walls near tub, shower, and toilet
- Use a nonskid bathmat in the shower or tub
- Keep a flashlight next to your bed
- Use a sturdy stepstool with a handrail and wide steps
- Buy a cordless phone so that you don't have to rush to the phone when it rings and can call for help if you fall

When outdoors

- Walk on grass when sidewalks are slick
- Put salt or kitty litter on icy sidewalks
- Wear rubber-soled shoes so you don't slip
- In the evenings, turn a light on outside of your front door before leaving home so that you have outdoor light when you return home
- Use handrails as you go up and down on steps and escalators
- Use a cane or walker



If you do fall, talk to your doctor.
After a fall, your chances of falling again doubles.



Give Us Your Feedback

Both the Medicare Health Outcomes Survey (HOS) and the Medicare Satisfaction Survey programs were created by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal government agency that runs the Medicare program, to monitor and improve the quality of care provided to Medicare members. Because members are randomly sampled, you may receive both surveys in the mail around the same time. These surveys may look similar, but they collect different kinds of information.

The HOS measures the quality of care Medicare members receive by asking questions about their health over a certain period of time.

The Medicare Satisfaction Survey, also known as the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey, collects information on member's experience and satisfaction with the health care they receive.

If you receive a survey (or both surveys) in the mail, please complete it! Your feedback will help us improve our services to you.

Stay Active with SilverSneakers®

Because we care about your well-being, The Health Plan includes the SilverSneakers® fitness program. This fitness and lifestyle benefit gives you opportunities to stay active, make friends and connect with your community – all at no additional cost.

Exercise is a key part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and can support a healthy immune system*. SilverSneakers offers a variety of options to help you keep moving, from virtual classes to working out at a participating fitness location**.

- SilverSneakers Live gives you full-length, live classes and workshops on the SilverSneakers website via Zoom***.
- The SilverSneakers GO™ mobile app gives you access to workout programs that can be tailored to your fitness level.
- Memberships to thousands of participating locations** nationwide means you can visit as many as you want, as often as you like.
- SilverSneakers On-Demand™ gives you access to 200+ online workout videos and information on topics like nutrition, fitness challenges and more.
- Stay connected. Visiting participating locations is a great way to socialize, you can also keep up with friends on the SilverSneakers Facebook page.



Go to [SilverSneakers.com](https://www.silversneakers.com) to create your account, get your SilverSneakers ID number and use all the digital resources at your convenience.

Always talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program.



Footnotes:

* [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29713319](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29713319)

** Participating locations (“PL”) are not owned or operated by Tivity Health, Inc. or its affiliates. Use of PL facilities and amenities is limited to terms and conditions of PL basic membership. Facilities and amenities vary by PL.

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