FOIL THE FLU
PROTECT THOSE YOU LOVE WITH A SHOT FOR THE FLU

Not all seasons are worth celebrating. Take flu season. Well, you’d probably rather leave it.

Just don’t ignore it. The best way to protect yourself and your family is by getting a flu shot every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

CDC recommends that everyone six months old and older get a shot as soon as it becomes available in your area. It’s especially important for people with asthma or chronic lung disease to get vaccinated.

There are many types of flu viruses. Each year, the flu vaccine is developed to protect against the viruses that are most likely to cause illness that year.

Even if you get sick with a different flu virus, the vaccine can make your illness milder. Flu symptoms may include fever, headache, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, and runny or stuffy nose.

STAYING-WELL STRATEGIES
You can help keep the flu and other illnesses away with some simple preventive actions. Try to:

• Avoid close contact with people who are ill, if possible.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
• Drink plenty of fluids, and eat healthfully.
• Exercise.
• Get enough sleep.
• Wash your hands often.

GET THE LATEST NEWS
For current information on flu, visit www.flu.gov.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CHECKUPS
HELPING YOU STAY WELL

With so many other things to do every day, you may wonder, “Do I really need to have a checkup for my COPD?” The answer is yes.

Regular checkups allow you to:

• Discuss problems with your doctor before they get worse.
• Keep track of what works—and what doesn’t—in your therapy.
• Review medicines and talk about whether a switch might help.
• Talk about ways to improve your breathing, activity level and quality of life.

The goal of checkups is to help you manage symptoms, stay well, and live a full and active life.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Even if you’ve had a spirometry test before, your doctor may do another. It uses a machine to measure how much air you can push out of your lungs. The results give a snapshot of how well your lungs are working and how they change over time.

Checkups also are a time for your doctor to ask questions about how you’re doing, such as “Have you noticed any changes in your symptoms?” and “Have you had any flare-ups?” Come prepared. Bring notes about changes, challenges and concerns.

HOW OFTEN?
Your healthcare provider will likely want to see you on a regular schedule. Once a year may be enough if your COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) is well-controlled—or more often if it’s not.

But don’t wait for your checkup if breathing or symptoms take a turn for the worse and medicine doesn’t help—check in with a doctor immediately.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Thoracic Society; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

GET THE BEST CARE

Making sure you receive the safest and most effective medical care is a priority for everyone on your healthcare team.

You can do your part to stay healthy and prevent mistakes in the care you receive as well. Be informed, be proactive and stay involved.

Share information. See your primary care doctor at least twice a year, even if you feel well. Talk to your doctor about your family and personal health history. Make sure your doctor and pharmacist know about all the medications, supplements and vitamins that you take. Share anything that you think your doctor should know or that you are concerned about—even if it is personal or uncomfortable.

Don’t be afraid to ask. Speak up if you have questions, concerns or doubts. If you have trouble remembering the things your doctor says, take notes or bring a friend or family member with you to your appointments. Ask for results from tests and procedures if you don’t hear from your doctor.

Be in the know. Ask about any test or procedure you are having so you understand why you need it and what is going to happen. Learn all you can about any health condition you may have—talk to your doctor and ask him or her where you can find more information.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

SKIP A TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL

You can’t prevent every asthma flare-up, but there are things you can do to help keep asthma under control. Better control can mean fewer flare-ups, and that can help keep you out of the hospital.

So take these steps:

Follow your asthma plan. Do you need to take medicine regularly? Are you checking your breathing with a peak flow meter? Stick to the plan you and your doctor made. Let your doctor know if your asthma is getting worse.

Take your asthma medicines as directed. Don’t change doses on your own. Talk to your doctor if you think you need more or less medicine.

Know your triggers. Many things can cause an asthma flare-up, including tobacco smoke, pollen, pet dander and perfume. Once you know your triggers, take steps to avoid them.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute