TIME FOR A FLU SHOT
This question might seem like a no-brainer, but answer it anyway: Would you like to avoid a hacking cough, fever and chills, and muscle aches?
If you answered yes, it’s time to get a flu shot. An annual flu vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from this highly contagious disease. That makes the vaccine a must for anyone who wants to reduce their risk of getting the flu—or spreading it to others.
And certain people who are prone to life-threatening complications of the flu, such as pneumonia, should always get an annual flu shot:
  > All children ages 6 months through 18 years on long-term aspirin treatment
  > Anyone with long-term health problems, such as asthma, heart or lung disease, or diabetes
  > Pregnant women
The best time to get a flu shot is as soon as it becomes available, which is usually in the fall. But getting vaccinated in December—or even later—is still beneficial.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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‘Tis the season for making happy memories—not coping with flare-ups of asthma or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease COPD. Yet festive get-togethers, a change to your routine and, even cold weather can make lung diseases worse.

These tips can help you avoid triggers that can bring on symptoms. To keep the holidays happy:

**Be a smart guest.** Are you staying with family or friends? See if you can stay with those who don’t smoke. Not possible? Try to find a hotel that’s completely smoke-free. Tobacco smoke can travel through doorways and cracks in walls and cause flare-ups.

**Bundle up.** Dry, cold air can irritate your airways. So wear a scarf over your nose and mouth to keep your airways from having spasms.

**Fight cold and flu germs.** At parties, try to avoid shaking hands. Wash your hands often if you do. And if you haven’t gotten your yearly flu shot yet, get one.

**Skip crackling fires and scented candles.** A wood-burning fire may seem especially inviting at this time of year, but it can irritate your lungs. And a scented candle is double trouble: It’s smoky—and its strong odor can also aggravate symptoms.

**Trim your holiday to-do-list.** Too many activities and obligations can make you feel frazzled. And stress can also trigger symptoms. So give yourself permission to do less and enjoy more
Breathing Well in Cold Weather

Cold weather can do more than make you chilly. If you have COPD or asthma, it can make breathing harder too.

That’s because cold air is often dry. And dry air can irritate your airways, which can make you wheeze, cough or feel short of breath.

Still, some fairly simple steps can help you breathe easy this winter. Before you head outside:

> **Bundle up.** Warp a scarf around your nose and mouth to warm the air before it enters your lungs. Then breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

> **Take it easy.** If it’s truly frigid, don’t exercise outdoors. Work out inside instead.

> **Check air quality forecasts.** Air pollution can be very high in the winter, which can make it even harder to breathe. If the air quality is poor, limit your time outside.

> **Don’t go outdoors empty-handed.** Always take your quick-relief medicine with you. If you do have symptoms, be sure to use it as soon as they start.

Finally, remember that winter is prime time for getting the flu, which can be serious in people with lung diseases. So if you haven’t had your yearly flu shot yet, it’s time to roll up your sleeve.

Sources: American Lung Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Pharmacy Corner

> Always take your medication as prescribed.

> Do not share medication—including inhalers—with others.

> If you find your medication is not working as well as you would like, talk with your pharmacist and he/she can provide additional instructions on getting the best result from your medication, including proper use of your inhaler.

> If you find you are using your rescue inhaler more than two times per week, you may need a different controller medication.

> Generic AirDuo is a new generic corticosteroid/Long-acting Beta-Agonist (LABA) combination controller medication that costs less than other brands. Check with your provider to find out if you would benefit from this medication, as well as the lower copay.

> Keep in frequent touch with your provider to ensure your asthma remains in control.
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