It’s a tiny needle—with a lot of power. A yearly vaccine is your best defense against the flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Why is this protection so important? Influenza, or the flu, can do more than make you feverish, achy, and miserable. It can lead to life-threatening infections, like pneumonia. If fact, every year, thousands of people end up in the hospital or die from what started out as the flu.

**PICK A DATE TO STAY SAFE**

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age or older. It’s especially important if you have a chronic health problem—such as asthma, COPD, heart disease, or diabetes. The flu can make your condition worse, and you have a higher risk of serious complications.

It’s best to get vaccinated before the end of October, when flu outbreaks tend to start. What if you miss that early opportunity? Better late than never. Flu viruses stick around for months—even into the spring—so, it’s always a good idea to get vaccinated.

Sources: cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/faq.htm
GERD and Asthma

THEY OFTEN GO HAND-IN-HAND

Everybody experiences acid reflux. It happens when you burp and get an acidic taste in your mouth or have heartburn. But if you have asthma, you’re more likely to have a severe form of acid reflux, called Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD).

Asthma flare-ups can cause a ring of muscle fibers in your esophagus to relax. As a result, acidic stomach juices can splash back up from your stomach into your esophagus. What’s more, GERD can make your asthma worse because it can irritate your airways and lungs.

TREATMENT HELPS

The good news: If you have both asthma and GERD, managing GERD can help control your asthma symptoms, so be sure to tell your doctor if you have acid reflux at least twice a week for more than a few weeks. You could have GERD.

To ease symptoms of GERD, your doctor may recommend you take a medication—for example, antacids or drugs that block acid production in your stomach. There are other steps that may also help:

> Lose weight if you’re carrying extra pounds
> Don’t lie down two or three hours after eating
> Don’t overeat
> Avoid foods that may make GERD worse, such as spicy ones
> Don’t smoke or be around secondhand smoke

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology; National Institutes of Health

WHY KIDS NEED A FLU VACCINE

If you’re wondering if your child really needs a flu shot, consider these facts:

The Flu is MORE DANGEROUS to kids than the common cold.

Every year millions of kids get sick with the flu, THOUSANDS ARE HOSPITALIZED from it, and some even die from the flu.

Children younger than five years old and those with long-term health problems like asthma and diabetes are at HIGH RISK OF FLU-RELATED COMPLICATIONS. Those include pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections.

WHEN AND HOW TO VACCINATE

Getting vaccinated against the flu is the best way to prevent it.

Everyone Six months and older needs a flu vaccine every year.

Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for vaccination.

*Flumist is covered for persons age 2 years to 49 years. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Asthma: Taking the Long View

ARE YOU GOING FOR THE QUICK FIX?

Do you often turn to your quick-relief asthma medication? If so, consider this rule of thumb: If you need a rescue inhaler more than twice a week, your asthma may not be in control.

Short-acting inhalers open up airways right away, but they don’t calm the inflammation that leads to asthma flare-ups in the first place. Most people need an everyday control medication for long-term relief.

Studies show that many people use one or more of their asthma medications improperly. Some don’t use control medications at all, even though they should.

So, talk with your doctor if you use a short-acting inhaler more than twice a week. A new medication—or your current one used in a new way—may give you the long-term control you need.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology; American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

Coping with a Cough

You’re coughing, and not because your asthma isn’t well controlled. It’s because you have a cold or other respiratory infection.

More than ever, it’s important to take your asthma medication exactly as prescribed. A respiratory infection can make your asthma worse, so it’s important to follow your doctor’s directions.

To cope with a chronic cough, try these tips:

> Soothe your throat: Try cough drops or hard candy for a dry, tickling cough, but never give them to a child under age three—they can cause choking.
> Add moisture: Use a vaporizer or a steaming shower to help calm your cough.
> Drink plenty of fluids: This can thin the mucus in your throat, making it easier to cough up the phlegm.
> Don’t smoke: Lighting up is never a good idea, especially if you have asthma. Smoking can aggravate your cough. And stay away from secondhand smoke.

Be sure to call your doctor right away if your cough gets worse when lying down; if you have a violent cough that begins rapidly; or if you have thick, yellowish-green phlegm. Call 911 if you have trouble breathing and your inhaler isn’t helping.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology; National Institutes of Health

QUIT

If you’ve tried to quit tobacco before without success, try again.

Most people make several attempts before they’re able to quit tobacco for good.

More than 50 million Americans have quit tobacco.
Stay in the know with the SelectHealth mobile app.

The SelectHealth® mobile app is your go-to resource for on-demand information about your health plan. Take advantage of features like:

- Plan details and member profile pages
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- Premium payments through the app (Individual plans only)
- Claims information for medical, dental, and pharmacy
- Helpful plan documents
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