



## Your practical guide to a flu-free winter

Winter and nasty viruses go hand in hand. In fact, many of us will battle a respiratory virus in the coming cold months. Besides COVID-19, which has become endemic and will be with us forever, this flu season comes with high infection rates of rhinovirus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and H1N1 (swine flu). These are highly contagious, but you can be protected by getting a flu vaccine and using non-pharmaceutical interventions.

Based on a National Department of Health's (NDoH's) media release, we are seeing quite a few patients being admitted and many immunocompromised patients being ventilated. So, in line with National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and NDoH's advisories, we would suggest that high-risk individuals (adults aged 65 and older, people with underlying illness such as heart and lung disease, and people living with HIV and tuberculosis, as well as pregnant women) minimise their risk by going to their healthcare provider or local clinic for a flu vaccine.

By taking a few simple steps, you can aid in preventing the spread, and keep you, your family and others safe.

### 1. Keep it clean (non-pharmaceutical interventions)



Remember to stick to the basic hygiene rules for avoiding viruses.

- Avoid touching your face or eating without washing your hands first.
- Use soap and water and wash your hands for as long as it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice.
- Alternatively, use hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol.

### 2. Boost your defences

Look after your immune system so it looks after you.

- Eat five to seven servings of fruit and veg daily.
- Get regular exercise.
- Prioritise quality sleep.
- Find healthy ways to cope with stress (think yoga stretches, rather than unhealthy snacks).
- Take a multivitamin containing immune-supporting zinc and vitamin C.



### 3. Embrace the outdoors



What do we do when it's cold? Close all the doors and windows, crank up the heating, and stay inside surrounded by other people. In other words, we create a germ-spreading zone. Rather wrap up warmly and open those windows. Better yet, take regular walks in the fresh air.

## Remember to get your flu shot!

#### Reference

Wits University: Should I get the flu vaccine?

NICD: Start of the 2024 influenza season

NDoH: Health Department warns of increasing respiratory infections

South African Government News Agency: High-risk people encouraged to get flu vaccination

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*Let us stay mindful of caring for one another and ourselves*