

TOOLBOX TALK #45

KEEP THE FLU AT BAY

If you think you don't have to worry about the flu, look at the 2017-2018 season and think again. That flu season was a "high severity" season, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The agency estimates that 80,000 people died from the flu that season.



How do people get the flu?

The flu is a respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat and lungs. It can be mild to severe, even deadly. It's believed that the flu virus spreads when people who have it cough, sneeze or talk, and it can be passed to others before a person knows he or she is infected.

During the 2016-2017 flu season, CDC estimated that about 47% of the population was vaccinated, which helped prevent "an estimated 5.3 million illnesses, 2.6 million influenza—associated medical visits and 85,000 hospitalizations associated with influenza."

Many workplaces offer flu vaccinations to their employees but if yours doesn't, the vaccine is readily available at a variety of places, including your healthcare provider's office, pharmacies and health clinics.

CDC recommends taking these steps to help prevent getting the flu:

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home from work when you're sick.
- Wash your hands regularly with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Do so with a tissue or into your shoulder.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs often are spread this way.

At work, routinely clean touched objects and surfaces such as doorknobs, keyboards and phones to help eliminate germs, CDC states.

In addition, it's important that employers stock their workplaces with adequate supplies of facial tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs and disposable wipes.