

# **Holiday Health: How to survive flu season**

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It's flu shot season and this year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added a new recommendation for flu shots for children ages 6 months to 5 years.

“What we've found out is that up to one in 1,000 children can be hospitalized for complications from the flu—that's higher than we thought initially,” said Steven Davis, an infectious disease specialist on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Irving. “One of the most important things people can do is talk to their physician about getting vaccinated.”

Not only do young children frequently come down with the flu, they often spread it to their grandparents. And grandparents who are weak or have chronic conditions like diabetes or lung problems may risk complications from the disease.



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“There’s lots of flu transmission over the holidays, with people traveling, visiting extended families and taking public transportation,” Davis said.

He recommends two tried and true (but underused) strategies for keeping yourself and others healthy:

Wash or disinfect your hands frequently. "It's common sense, but it can be very helpful in preventing transmission in flu season," Davis said.

Cover your cough. "We remind people in the ER, if they cough or sneeze, to use a tissue and hand disinfectant," Davis said.

If you do get the flu, see your doctor right away. Medications such as Tamiflu and Relenza can cut the intensity and duration of symptoms.

But who needs a shot? According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these people should get a flu shot every year:

- children ages 6 months to 5 years.
- people 65 years of age and older.
- people 2 years old or older who have an underlying, long-term illness.
- women who will be pregnant during flu season.
- people who live in nursing homes or other chronic-care facilities.
- people who are 6 months to 18 years of age and take aspirin daily.
- health care workers who have contact with patients.
- people who have or take care of a baby under 6 months old.

For more information about Baylor Regional Medical Center at Grapevine, visit [www.BaylorHealth.com](http://www.BaylorHealth.com).