

Montana Health Care Programs MESSENGER

Prevent Seasonal Flu!

Protect yourself against the flu by getting a flu shot each year. Health experts recommend the flu vaccine for just about everyone. **Some people have a higher risk of problems from the flu. It's especially important that these people (and those who live with them) get a flu shot. They include:**

- All kids 6 months through 4 years old (babies younger than 6 months are also considered high risk, but they cannot receive the flu vaccine).
- All women who are pregnant, are thinking about becoming pregnant, have recently given birth, or are breastfeeding during flu season.
- People with a chronic condition (i.e.: asthma, diabetes, lung disease, heart disease).
- Seniors age 65 years and older.

Can the flu shot give me the flu?

No. The flu vaccine is made from either inactive flu virus or none at all. That means getting a flu shot cannot give you the flu. But it can reduce your chances of catching the flu.

Why get your flu shot every year?

- Flu viruses are always changing. Scientists predict which virus will be most common each year. Flu vaccines are changed each flu season to make them work as well as possible.
- Your protection with the flu shot gets weaker over time. That's why a yearly flu shot is needed to keep you from getting sick.

When and where should you get your flu shot?

You should get a flu shot before the flu starts spreading where you live. Fall is the best time to get your yearly shot. You can get your flu shot in clinics, health centers and pharmacies.

Is the nasal flu vaccine a recommended alternative to the flu shot?

Yes. For the 2019 - 2020 flu season, the nasal flu vaccine is an option (for certain people). Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about whether this is an appropriate option for you.

How do you know if someone has the flu?



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A Helpful Parenting Tool

The State of Montana offers a helpful, age specific, on-line tool for parents with children from 0 through 19 years old. Please visit the [Parenting Montana](https://parentingmontana.org/) web page by clicking on the above link or visit: <https://parentingmontana.org/>.

The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea. This is more common in children than adults.

Where should you go if you have flu symptoms?

Visit your doctor or urgent care or call the nurse advice line with any health questions. Unless you have a very high fever or trouble breathing, you should not need to go to the emergency room for the flu.

COLD		VS	FLU	
SYMPTOMS				
✓ SNEEZING			✓ FEVER OR FEELING FEVERISH	
✓ STUFFY NOSE			✓ RUNNY OR STUFFY NOSE	
✓ SORE THROAT			✓ SORE THROAT	
✓ COUGHING			✓ COUGHING	
✓ POST-NASAL DRIP (mucus dripping down your throat)			✓ VOMITING OR DIARRHEA (less common in adults)	
✓ WATERY EYES			✓ WATERY EYES	
✓ MILD HEADACHE			✓ HEADACHES	
✓ MILD BODY ACHES			✓ MUSCLE OR BODY ACHES	
TREATMENT				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get lots of rest. 2. Drink plenty of fluids. 3. Take over-the-counter (OTC) medicine to help you're your symptoms*. <p>*Antibiotics will NOT help you recover from a cold</p>			<p>Make an appointment with your medical provider. There are medications your provider may prescribe for treating the flu called "antivirals".</p>	



More Tips for Flu Prevention

- **Get the flu shot, if you haven't already done so!** It's your *best defense* against the virus.
- **Vaccines are available** at walk-in clinics, drugstores, your doctor's office, and other select locations.
- **Avoid crowds** or close contact with sick people.
- **Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs can spread!
- **Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve** (*not your hands*), and away from someone else.
- **Toss used tissues and wash your hands** with soap and running water.
- **Have alcohol-based hand sanitizer with you** when soap and water aren't accessible.
- **Don't travel, go to school or work when you're sick!** (You'll risk feeling worse and giving it to others.) Stay home for at least 24 hours and wait until you have no signs of fever *without* the use of medication.

HIV Information and Prevention

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is working closely with local public health programs and contractors to make more available a treatment to prevent HIV-infection. The treatment is called **pre-exposure prophylaxis**, or **PrEP** for short. PrEP treatment includes a daily pill intended for people at high risk of HIV-infection. Studies show that PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by more than 90% and 70% for people who inject drugs. PrEP is, however, more than taking a pill each day; it involves helping at-risk people establish an ongoing relationship with a provider who can support the routine testing required when people take anti-HIV medications over the long-term.

- Montana's PrEP Assistance Program provides funds to financially support un- and under-insured patients by reimbursing providers delivering PrEP related services.
- Three providers across the state are currently enrolled in the DPHHS PrEP Assistance Program and more are joining.
- The participation of these providers assures that PrEP services will be available in Montana's largest communities, which are also the areas of highest HIV burden.
- The DPHHS HIV/STD program continues to develop partnerships with additional providers and creates systems to extend the availability of PrEP services to rural communities across Montana.

Additional details on PrEP, including resources for clinicians, are available at our website:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/hivstd/hivprevention>

Caregivers: Take Care of *You*, Too

(November is National Caregivers Month)

For adult children with families and jobs of their own, the added stress of taking care of aging parents or other family members is a juggling act that can put emotional, physical, and financial strains on their own health and relationships. From the common cold, to depression, diabetes, and heart disease, experts say that caregivers are at higher risk for getting sick, since about 72 percent skip going to their own doctors when they should. Whether it's a sometime-ride to the senior center, ongoing in-home care, or care that's long-distance, caregivers need to take care of themselves, in order to stay healthy and "be there" for those who need them most.

An American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) study says there are about 40 million caregivers in the United States. Activities can include grocery shopping, cooking, housework, and paying bills, to help with bathing, medications, and talking to doctors. [AARP](#), the [Caregiver Action Network](#), and the [National Institute on Aging](#) offer

Easy Recipes for Autumn Treats

Apple Chips: (4 servings)

- 4 apples, thinly sliced
 - 4 tsp. sugar
 - 1 tsp. cinnamon
- Preheat oven to 200 degrees;
-In a large bowl, toss apples with sugar and cinnamon;
-Place a cooling rack onto a baking sheet. Lay apple slices on the cooling rack without overlapping;
-Cook for 2 to 3 hours flipping apples after one hour and 15 minutes;
-Continue baking until apples are dry but still bendable. Apples will crisp while cooling.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Hummus: (4 servings)

- 1 (15 oz) can of chickpeas (drained and rinsed)
 - 1/3 c. honey
 - 1/4 c. plus 2 tbsp. creamy peanut butter
 - 1/4 c. unsweetened chocolate cocoa powder
 - 1 tsp. vanilla extract
 - Pinch of salt
 - Small bag mini chocolate chips
 - Fruit, crackers, or pretzels to dip
- Place chickpeas, honey, 1/4 cup peanut butter, cocoa powder, vanilla, and salt in food processor or blender and blend until smooth.
-Transfer to a serving bowl. Melt remaining 2 tablespoons peanut butter in microwave and drizzle over dip. Top with mini chips and enjoy!



resources for caregivers and their families coping with these day-to-day challenges, from condition-specific caregiving (like with Alzheimer's or COPD), to how to talk to older parents, and navigate legal matters.

Here are some tips for caregivers:

- **Talk openly to your parents or loved one.** Cover needs, roles, and types of care.
- **Take care of you.** Give yourself a break when you need it! Don't forget your own health while focused on others.
- **Ask for help.** Seek the support of other caregivers and people who'll understand what you're going through.
- **Create contact lists.** Know your loved one's clergy, doctors, drugstores, and friends.
- **Are you depressed?** Experts say about 40 to 70 percent of caregivers show major signs. Watch your loved one's actions and mood but stay tuned in to your own. If you've lost your appetite, or lost interest in things you enjoy; if you aren't sleeping well (or too much); if you feel angry, hopeless, sad, or unfocused, get professional help if it lasts two weeks or more.
- **Write it down.** Be ready for a loved one's doctor visit. Jot down medication info. Prepare questions ahead of time. Mention health changes that you see.
- **Get organized.** Have medical information and legal papers in order, anytime, and for emergencies.

Take care of you, so you can take care of those you love!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Medicaid Open Enrollment is . . . ANYTIME!

You may have noticed public announcements for the Affordable Care Act/Health Insurance Marketplace Open Enrollment period (Nov 1st – Dec 15th) but . . .
You may qualify for Montana Medicaid.
Applications for Medicaid can be submitted anytime! See if you qualify at [Apply Medicaid](#)

Cold Weather Help Available

DPHHS has two programs to help low-income individuals with heating costs:

Weatherization – items to help make your home more energy efficient

LIEAP – Assistance with heating bills

Both homeowners and renters may apply for these programs
You may qualify automatically if your household receives SNAP, SSI or TANF benefits

Ask for more information at your local HRDC Office, locations found here: [HRDC Offices](#)



Key Contacts

Medicaid/HMK Plus Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits copayments, or Passport to Health:
1-800-362-8312

[MT Healthcare Programs](#)

Nurse First Advice Line

For questions when you are sick, hurt, or have health questions.

1-800-330-7847

[MT NurseFirst](#)

Montana Relay Service

For the deaf or hard of hearing.

1-800-253-4091 or 711

Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions.

1-888-706-1535

[MT Public Assistance](#)

Transportation Center

For questions regarding travel or approval. **Call before you travel, or you may not be reimbursed.**

1-800-292-7114.