

It's still not too late for a flu shot

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(HealthDay)—Even though it's the end of February, it's still not too late to get a flu shot, doctors say.

This [flu season](#) is one of the worst seen in the United States in years. Flu-linked hospitalizations were still rising earlier this month, and 84 children have died from [flu complications](#) so far, according to government health officials.

"There's still time to get the flu shot. The [flu shot](#) helps lessen symptoms and protects those around you as well," said Dr. Mary Barsanti-Sekhar, a [primary care physician](#) at Loyola Medicine in Maywood, Ill.

Good hand hygiene is one of the best ways to avoid getting the flu.

"Washing hands with soap and water is the best option," Barsanti-Sekhar said in a Loyola news release. "Anti-bacteria alcohol gels are OK to use if you don't have access to soap and water. Frequent hand washing, especially after being in [public places](#), helps lessen the chance of exposure."

Also, at work and in public places, try to avoid touching items such as door handles, tables, countertops and shared phones.

"Any items that are frequently being touched and not routinely being disinfected, you want to try to avoid," Barsanti-Sekhar said. "And if you do touch them, be sure not to touch your mouth or face after being in contact with those items until you can wash your hands."

A healthy lifestyle can boost your ability to fight off the flu.

"The best defense against the flu is to be healthy before you are exposed," she explained. "Make sure you are getting enough rest, exercising and eating right."

What if you do get the flu?

Stay home from work or school, avoid contact with family and friends, and regularly disinfect surfaces that you touch, she advised.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more on [preventing the flu](#).

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