

Feeling icky? Then stay home and don't share it with the rest of us

January 25 2019, by Matthew Oates

While millions of Americans return to work and school after the weekend, others will still be at home.

And that's fine to one Purdue University nursing faculty member.

Libby Richards, an assistant professor in Purdue's School of Nursing who specializes in [public health](#), said that [flu season](#) is ramping up quickly across many parts of the U.S.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [flu activity](#) is elevated nationally. Across the nation, hospitals have enacted visitor restrictions to reduce the spread of influenza and influenza-like illnesses to patients of all ages and their staffs. As a result, urgent care centers, emergency rooms physicians' offices and clinics in affected areas have seen an increase in traffic.

"One of the best ways to reduce your chances of getting influenza is to get a [flu shot](#)," Richards said.

Richards offers some simple tips to avoid getting the flu. "It's still not too late to get vaccinated," Richards said. Flu vaccine takes about two weeks to build up in your body. A person can still get the vaccine today to help lessen the severity of the flu. Flu season traditionally starts in October and can go through May.

Other tips include washing hands; not touching one's eyes, nose or

mouth; getting sleep; eating well; exercising regularly; and cleaning or disinfecting commonly touched surfaces frequently.

"If you feel you might have the flu, see a [health care provider](#) as soon as possible. They can provide an anti-viral medication that could lessen the flu and help prevent serious complications, as flu can keep you sick from several days to less than two weeks," Richards said.

Once a person gets the flu or develop flu-like symptoms, that person should stay at home, rest and recover.

Richards does point out that you can still get the flu if you have had the flu shot, but you cannot get the flu from the flu shot.

"If the influenza strain in the vaccine matches the virus in the community, then we have a high effectiveness rate," Richards said. "If it does not, the vaccine's effectiveness is reduced. Getting the vaccine can still help a lot of at-risk populations such as children and the elderly in reducing serious complications."

There is a difference between the stomach flu and influenza, said Richards. The [stomach flu](#) attacks the stomach and intestines and is caused by bacteria or viruses. Influenza symptoms include fever, congestion, muscle aches and fatigue. Influenza is caused by a virus and affects the respiratory system.

Flu shots are available at many locations, including physicians' offices, clinics, local health departments, pharmacies and college health centers. Some employers and schools also provide the flu shot on site. In many instances a flu shot is considered part of preventive health care, meaning insurance companies should cover the costs. Medicare and Medicaid also cover the costs. People ages six months and older are eligible to receive the flu shot.

Provided by Purdue University

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