

News Of 'Flu' Virus And Vaccines

Q. Every winter at least one member of my family seems to come down with the flu. What causes this disease and what can I do to help protect us all from it?

A. Influenza, called "flu" for short, is an acute, highly contagious disease caused by a virus present in droplets coughed or sneezed from the nose and throat. Marked by fever, pain in the head and back, and weakness, influenza may attack the respiratory or

intestinal tracts. The disease usually strikes in winter, as you have noticed, or in the spring, and epidemics occur in 2 or 4 year cycles.

Vaccines have been developed to give protection against known strains of the "flu" virus. (There are several types of flu viruses and many different strains within these types.) Since it takes 2-3 weeks to build up immunity to specific strains, vaccination should be completed before



evidence of an epidemic. Protection lasts for 8 months to a year, so an injection in the fall will be effective

against known flu viruses through the next winter and spring seasons. However, it sometimes happens that an entirely new strain appears against which the vaccination gives no protection. When this happens, the best protection for every member of the family is to maintain general health by getting enough fresh air and exercise, plenty of rest and eating a well-balanced diet.

Give the world a little gift today. Blood.

The American Red Cross. The Good Neighbor.

Newspapers: They Tell it Like it is!

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