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Health

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ASSOCIATES, part of Blue Ridge Healthcare, is a Family Medical Practice.

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and generalized aches and pains, "said Dr. Tracy Chapman, FNP at Family Medical Associates, part of Blue Ridge Healthcare Medical Group.

Both are viral infections that cannot be treated with antibiotics and will usually get better on their own with rest, extra fluids and over-the-counter pain medications.

"Flu patients, however, have a longer battle and may end up with a serious complication such as pneumonia that is difficult to fight off," Chapman said.

About 36,000 Americans die each year while another 125,000 are hospitalized as a result of the flu and its complications.

Those most at risk of suffering severe complications are the very young, the very old and those with chronic medical conditions.

That's why these groups are always listed among those who should get priority when supplies of the Vaccine are short, or they were last year.

"This year, however, supplies are expected to be ample, and there's no reason for anyone not to get immunized."

Chapman said.

"The predominant flu virus changes from year to year, and the vaccine is formulated to fight the most dominant strains. Last year's flu shot didn't protect you this year, but it may shorten the time you need to develop antibodies," Chapman said.

Children younger than nine who have never had a flu shot may need a second dose, about a month after the first, to develop full immunity.

Older persons and those with chronic illnesses may get the flu even though they are vaccinated, but the disease is usually not as severe.

The vaccine is made of killed virus, so you can't get the flu from a shot – only a very rare reaction that might suppress immunity.

Remember, antibiotics won't help against the flu unless you have a secondary bacterial infection develops.

Don't Let Flu Season Get You Down

The predominant flu virus arrives in your area.

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In addition to the coughing, you may tend to dismiss the flu as merely a bad cold. The majority of colds usually come on somewhat gradually, but the flu tends to wipe you out in a day that you're dealing with something more serious.

If you have the flu, you usually know on the very first day that you're dealing with something more serious. In addition to the coughing, you may tend to dismiss the flu as merely a bad cold. The majority of colds usually come on somewhat gradually,

those with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease, chronic lung problems, AIDS or cancer,

pregnant women,

persons who live with or care for persons with chronic medical conditions,

health care professionals.

"Persons age 50 to 64 form another moderate- to high-risk group because of the high prevalence of chronic medical conditions in this age group."

Flu season in the northern hemisphere runs from November to April. Flu shots are generally available starting October 1, and it's a good idea to get yours as early as possible so you have time to build immunity before the virus arrives in your area.

"You're never too late to prepare yourself for the flu. Flu patients, however, have a longer battle and may end up with a serious complication such as pneumonia that is difficult to fight off."

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