

Take 3: Seasonal Flu

[Host] Remember the expression "Take two and call me in the morning."? Well, when it comes to influenza, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says, "It's best to take three. It could save your life." Dr. Bresee, what does CDC mean by "take three?"

[Dr. Joe Bresee] "Take three" is a way for people to remember the three main actions they can take to fight the flu.

[Host] And what are those?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] Well, first and foremost, take time to get the vaccine. As always, CDC recommends seasonal influenza vaccination against seasonal influenza viruses.

[Host] Who should be vaccinated?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] CDC recommends that everyone six months of age and older get vaccinated against the flu each year. It's especially important for people at high risk of severe illness if they get the flu and people who care for those people. People at high risk for severe illness if they get infected are pregnant women, young children, people 65 years and older, or people with underlying health disorders, like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease.

[Host] And step two?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] Step two is to take simple actions to stop the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. This includes covering your mouth or nose when you cough or sneeze with a tissue and making sure to throw the tissue in a trash can when you're finished. Also, be sure to wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand cleaners.

[Host] And three?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] Three is take antiviral drugs if you get sick with the flu and your doctor prescribes them. These drugs can make you feel better faster or make your symptoms milder. Antiviral drugs, remember, work best if they're given early -- within two days of getting sick. These drugs are really an important part of a treatment option, and the priority for their use are among the most severely ill people, like hospitalized people, but also people who get sick who have an underlying medical condition that makes them more likely to get influenza-associated complications.

[Host] So, to recap, "take three" means to, one, take time to get a seasonal flu vaccine. Number two, take everyday preventive actions. Three, take influenza antiviral medications if your doctor recommends them.

[Dr. Joe Bresee] That's right.

[Host] Thank you, Doctor. To learn more, visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.