

JIFNEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund featuring Safety, Health & Wellness

FLU SEASON IS BAD... MIGHT GET EVEN WORSE

SOURCE: WWW.BLOOMBERG.COM



The influenza virus that's sickened millions of Americans this season is already the most widespread outbreak since public health authorities began keeping track more than a dozen years ago. Now, with the threat of more strains emerging, it might get even worse.

"Flu is everywhere in the U.S. right now," said Dan Jernigan, director of the influenza division at the national Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "This is the first year we have had the entire continental U.S. be the same color on the graph, meaning there is widespread activity in all of the continental U.S. at this point."

The most optimistic assumption among government experts is that the season peaked a few weeks ago, marking the apex of what was already an early and severe outbreak. However, such an outlook requires observers to ignore that outpatient doctor visits have continued to climb (albeit more slowly) in the first week of 2018, yielding the most flu cases ever for this time of the year.

Even if the hopeful assessment by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention bears out, there will still be an additional 11 weeks to 13 weeks of flu circulating across the country. "In general, we see things peaking right about now, but that means there is still a whole lot more flu to go," Jernigan said. "In addition, there are other strains of influenza still to show up that could be a major cause of disease."

That may already be happening. The CDC is starting to see infections caused by the H1N1 strain of the virus in states grappling with high levels of the H3N2 strain, the predominant version this season. In addition, Jernigan said, yet another type of flu caused by influenza B viruses is expected to show up later in the season.

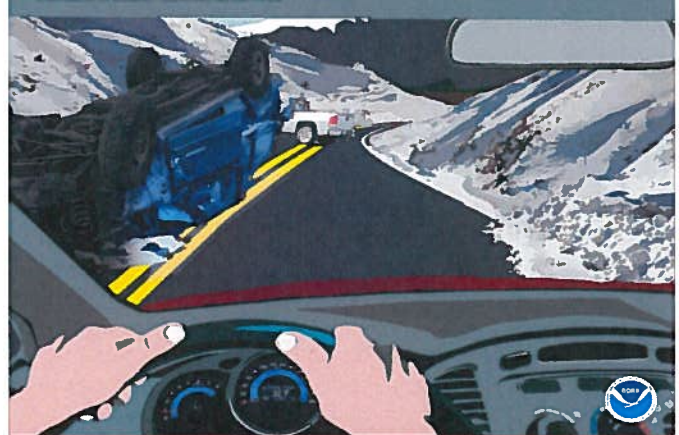
H3N2 has compounded the damage usually wrought by the annual flu outbreak. It's known for both its severity and ability to evade the protection provided by vaccinations that are typically more effective against the other types of flu.

Most flu vaccines are made using eggs, which are less hospitable to growing the H3N2 strain and thus less likely to develop an effective

vaccine. That strain goes through more changes over time than other versions, so vaccines are often behind the curve when they reach the general public.

Recent advances in manufacturing have yielded two immunizations that aren't made in eggs: Sanofi SA's Flublok and CSL Ltd.'s Flucelvax. Flublok is a recombinant vaccine, which includes only the protein expressed on the surface of the influenza virus, while Flucelvax is grown in mammalian cells. Since neither uses eggs in the manufacturing process, it's possible that the vaccines that result may look more like what's actually circulating, Jernigan said.

WINTER DRIVING



Each year weather-related crashes cause more than 6,000 deaths and 480,000 injuries. If the outside temperature is near freezing, drive like you're on ice... YOU MAY BE!

WINTER WELLNESS

SOURCE: WWW.HEALTHSTATUS.COM



1. Go for a walk even when the weather is really cold – your body has to work overtime to get warm and you may burn up to 50% more calories than you would on the same walk in summer! But, go a little slower until you get warm and keep up the hydration.
2. If you find it hard to get motivated to exercise in winter...just think of spring and how much harder it is to get back into shape rather than maintain your fitness throughout the winter.
3. Be aware of shoulder tendonitis and stress fracture if you don't exercise in winter and expect to pick up where you left off after a whole winter with no exercise.
4. Instead of picking up a cup of hot chocolate to keep yourself warm, try a herbal beverage.
5. Gain an interest in indoor sports as opposed to cycling and jogging outdoors. Don't forget that swimming at an indoor pool is an option for a great cardio workout!
6. The cold air and indoor heaters can dry out your skin. Make sure you drink at least 8 glasses per day and use moisturizers.
7. Buy some indoor plants to soften up the dry atmosphere caused through heating. Indoor plants give off moisture and oxygen and the colors will brighten up a dull day outside.
8. Caught a cold or flu? If the infection is above the neck (nose, throat) you could be OK to complete a low intensity workout. However, if you have symptoms that are worse than an average cold (chest congestion, muscle aches), exercise will only make you worse and delay your recovery. Rest is the best medicine.
9. Wear the right clothes when exercising in winter. Polypropylene is the perfect fabric to wear underneath a tracksuit, which will provide great insulation but minimize moisture loss. Gore-Tex is a fabric used widely for providing protection from the rain and wind.
10. Feel like sitting on the couch with a video and snacking on a cold, wet day? Reach for a protein bar or packet of soy nuts instead of high energy, high fat snacks.

Winter Breakfast On The Go... ALMOND-HONEY POWER BAR

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- ¼ cup slivered almonds
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds
- 1 tablespoon flaxseeds, preferably golden
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 cup unsweetened whole-grain puff cereal
- 1/3 cup currants
- 1/3 cup chopped dried apricots
- 1/3 cup chopped golden raisins
- 1/4 cup creamy almond butter
- 1/4 cup turbinado sugar
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt



SOURCE: WWW.EATINGWELL.COM

PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat an 8-inch-square pan with cooking spray.
- Spread oats, almonds, sunflower seeds, flaxseeds and sesame seeds on a large, rimmed baking sheet. Bake until the oats are lightly toasted and the nuts are fragrant, shaking the pan halfway through, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Add cereal, currants, apricots and raisins; toss to combine.
- Combine almond butter, sugar, honey, vanilla and salt in a small saucepan. Heat over medium-low, stirring frequently, until the mixture bubbles lightly, 2 to 5 minutes.
- Immediately pour the almond butter mixture over the dry ingredients and mix with a spoon or spatula until no dry spots remain. Transfer to the prepared pan. Lightly coat your hands with cooking spray and press the mixture down firmly to make an even layer (if necessary, wait until the mixture cools slightly). Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes; cut into 8 bars.

REMINDER...

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is reminding employers to post OSHA Form 300A, which lists a summary of the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred during 2017. The form must be posted between Feb. 1 and April 30, 2018. The summary must include the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred in 2017 and were logged on OSHA Form 300, Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses. To assist in calculating incidence rates, information about the annual average number of employees and total hours worked during the calendar year is also required. If a company recorded no injuries or illnesses in 2017, the employer must enter "zero" on the total line. The form must be signed and certified by a company executive. Form 300A should be displayed in a common area where notices to employees are usually posted.