

The

Liker Health Report



Keeping People Focused on Staying Fit & Healthy

Fall 2017

Flu Season is Around the Corner

When Influenza Viruses Abound, Vaccination is Your Best Protection Against Infection

Back to school, foliage changing color, and the end of daylight savings time signal that it's once again time to get that annual flu shot. According to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the 2017-2018 quadrivalent vaccine for people living in the Northern Hemisphere contains two influenza A strains (Michigan/45/2015 [H1N1] and Hong Kong/4801/2014 [H3N2]) and two influenza B stains (Brisbane/60/2008-like [Victoria lineage] and Phuket/3073/2013-like [Yamagata lineage]). A high-dose trivalent formulation is available for those people over the age of sixty-five; this version contains the two A strains plus the B-Brisbane strain.

When you get a flu shot, the dead viruses in it stimulate the body to make antibodies against those same viruses. This process takes about two weeks. Later, if you are exposed to the same viruses, these antibodies will go to work protecting you from getting sick. The rationale is that scientists can take the common strains of flu viruses, kill and purify them (so they cannot cause disease), and create injectable vaccines. The human immune system does the rest. The flu shot should be taken between late September and mid-October to provide maximum protection. Since immunity is not passed from year to year, flu shots are necessary every year. Also, the flu virus mutates yearly, so the vaccine that protected you in 2016 will not adequately protect you in 2017-18.

Some people claim that they caught the flu after getting a flu shot. This is not possible. The flu vaccine contains dead viruses which cannot infect or cause the flu. A small minority will get mild, localized side effects, such as swelling of the arm, a slight headache, or even a slight fever for a day. If you really get the flu, it is because you were incubating the virus and would have gotten it anyway or you contracted a different strain. Additionally, many people mistake a cold for the flu, and although colds are caused by viruses, they are not the same ones.

Autumn Safety Tips

Get a flu shot.

Wash hands regularly to avoid spreading germs.

Understand when antibiotics are necessary (bacterial infections) and when they are not (viral infections, like the flu).

Be prepared for cold or inclement weather.

Test and replace batteries for smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

Avoid drinking and driving during holiday gatherings.

RESEARCH PEARLS:

Knee Osteoarthritis Incidence on the Rise

Since the 1940s, the incidence of knee osteoarthritis has doubled in the United States. Interestingly, the reason why is not simply because Americans are more overweight or obese than ever before and living longer than in the past. Researchers examining more than 2,000 skeletons from every part of the U.S. believe that there is a modern environmental component. Researchers are not exactly sure what that component is or how to deal with it, but they did conclude that "if you were born after World War II you have approximately twice the likelihood of getting knee osteoarthritis at a given age or BMI than if you were born earlier."

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 2017 Aug; 114(35):9332-9336.



Make Sleep a Priority

Adequate, high-quality sleep is key to health

Sleep isn't just for babies and children. It's important at every age because of its critical role in a person's overall health and well-being. Along with exercise and good nutrition, adequate, high-quality sleep helps preserve physical and mental health, and by extension, improves quality/quantity of life, increases daytime productivity/performance, and safeguards against life-threatening accidents (safety issues).

Sleep "recharges" the brain so that it can function optimally while you're awake. During sleep, the brain performs vital functions, such as removing the build-up metabolic byproducts and forming new learning and memory pathways (neural connections). Sleep enhances problem solving skills, decision making abilities, creativity, memory, mental alertness, and mood. Research shows that sleep deficiency can alter brain activity and when chronic, it can hinder problem solving and decision making; make it more difficult to cope with stress and change; and decrease control with respect to emotions or behavior. Chronically sleep-deprived individuals have an increased risk of depression, suicide, and risk-taking behaviors.

Sleep is also critical to maintaining physical health and preventing diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, stroke, kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. During sleep, the body repairs the heart and blood vessels; balances the 'hungry' hormone (ghrelin) and the 'full' hormone (leptin) to prevent overeating; modulates insulin levels to decrease blood glucose levels and reduce the risk of diabetes; triggers the release of the hormone (IgF-1) that builds muscle mass and helps repair and regenerate cells and tissues throughout the body; and helps the immune system defend against infectious pathogens, such as viruses and bacteria. A consistent lack of sleep compromises the immune system and makes people more likely to get sick and be sicker longer.

How Much Sleep is Enough?

Infants (4-12 mos)	12-16 hours*
Children (1-2 yrs)	11-14 hours*
Children (3-5 yrs)	10-13 hours*
Children (6-12 yrs)	9-12 hours
Teens (13-18 yrs)	8-10 hours
Adults (18+ yrs)	7-8 hours

*includes naps



***Even a soul submerged in sleep
is hard at work and helps make
something of the world.***

Heraclitus

Dear Dr. Liker...

I'm worried that my elderly mother's loneliness may be affecting her health. Do you have any suggestions?



Anyone who suffers from loneliness or knows someone who does should be concerned. In fact, recent research suggests that it's a public health hazard on par with obesity. Research encompassing 148 studies and 300,000 participants was presented at the annual conference of the American Psychological Association; the conclusion was that individuals with more social interactions had a 50% lower risk of dying prematurely. An additional 70 studies encompassing 3.4 million people across the globe reported that social isolation, loneliness, and/or living alone contributed to early death. AARP estimates that 42 million Americans age forty-five and older experience chronic loneliness.

It's important to note that single individuals or those who live alone are not necessarily lonely or unhappy. But if someone does feel lonely for extended periods of time, the best "cure" is activity -- whether an activity that involves other people, or just getting out of bed, or getting out of the house and doing something different. Both physical and mental activity can help alleviate loneliness and prevent or improve certain health conditions associated with advancing age.

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