

Are You Ready for Refriger-nation?

With Extreme Winter Weather Predicted, Protect Your Family's Health by Being Proactive

This is the first of three in a series of stories about "refriger-nation."

"The Old Farmer's Almanac" is predicting such an unusually brutal winter for much of the U.S., it's coined a colorful term for it - refriger-nation.

As the almanac claims to have an 80 percent-accuracy rate, it may be time to heed Benjamin Franklin's sage advice that "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

To protect your family when arctic winds blow, try these health [tips](#) from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):



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To stay healthy this winter, tips from the Centers for Disease Control include getting a flu shot, washing your hands and keeping germs to yourself.

- **Get a flu vaccination.** More than 200,000 Americans are hospitalized from complications from influenza each year, including 20,000 children under age 5. Vaccinations are recommended for everyone over six months old. The CDC recommends checking with your doctor to ensure you have no [health conditions](#) that would otherwise prevent you from getting a flu shot.
- **Your health is in your hands.** Colds and flu are passed via coughing, sneezing and touching germ ridden surfaces, and schools are a perfect breeding ground for illnesses. Encourage children to wash their hands by setting a good example and scrubbing with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds, about the time needed to hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- **Cover your mouth.** Just don't use your hand to do it. When you cough or sneeze, use a tissue and throw it away. If you don't have one, you can sneeze into your elbow.
- **Keep your germs to yourself.** Many people won't stay home when they're sick, so the subway, malls and other gathering places make it easy to catch a bug. Also avoid intimate contact such as hugging, kissing or shaking hands.
- **Get the right treatment.** Call your doctor to see what he or she recommends for your symptoms. Antibiotics can help treat bacterial infections, but not a cold or the flu, which are viral infections.
- **Don't treat your child like an adult.** It's a good idea to clear any medication - prescription or over the counter - with your physician. Never give children adult medicine because they require special doses based on their age and size.