

## **December Health and Wellness Observances**

The Health & Well-being Interest Group has reviewed several sources of information on national health-related observances held throughout the year, with the objective of selecting activities of interest to our employer members. These tools, educational resources and other relevant information are shared with our members in advance to support workforce education and communication activities. The spotlighted observances for December appear below and in the Members Only section at [www.gpbch.org](http://www.gpbch.org).

### **National Handwashing Awareness Week (December 1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>)**

As identified by the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov), many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. [Hand hygiene](#) is a great way to prevent infections. However, [studies show](#) that on average, healthcare providers clean their hands less than half of the times they should. This contributes to the spread of [healthcare-associated infections](#) that affect 1 in 31 hospital patients on any given day. Even healthcare providers are at risk of getting an infection while they are treating patients. Preventing the spread of germs is especially important in hospitals and other facilities such as dialysis centers and nursing homes.

#### **Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings**

As a patient in a healthcare setting, you are at risk of getting an infection while you are being treated for something else. Patients and their loved ones can play a role in asking and reminding healthcare providers to clean their hands. Your hands can spread germs too, so protect yourself by cleaning your hands often.

<https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/about/hand-hygiene-for-healthcare.html>

#### **Protect yourself by asking questions:**

Don't be afraid to use your voice: **it's ok to ask your healthcare provider questions**, such as:

- "Before you start the exam, would you mind cleaning your hands again?"
- "I'm worried about germs spreading in the hospital. Will you please clean your hands once more before you start my treatment?"



**Frequent questions about hand hygiene:** Keeping hands clean is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/faq/index.html>

**Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:** provides hand-hygiene advice for patients and providers. <https://www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/>

**Health Promotion Materials:** Resources are available to promote the importance of handwashing in community settings. <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/communication-resources/index.html>



## **National Influenza (Flu) Vaccination Week (December 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>)**

The National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) is a national awareness week focused on highlighting the importance of influenza vaccination. It was established by the CDC in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu-resources/index.html>

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the **nose, throat**, and sometimes the **lungs**. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. People who have flu often feel some or all of **these symptoms**: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea & vomiting. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>

### **What is the difference between Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19?**

#### **Flu Vaccination for People at High Risk**

A goal of NIVW is to communicate the importance of flu vaccination for people who are at high risk for developing flu-related complications. To see if you are at a high risk of infection, view the full list: [People at High Risk of Developing Flu–Related Complications](#).

#### **CDC Digital Media Toolkit: 2024-25 Flu Season**

CDC’s seasonal flu vaccination campaign materials are available to assist partners in communicating about the importance of vaccination. This digital toolkit includes details on events/activities, sample social media and newsletter content, graphics, web assets, and media prep material. This material is downloadable, shareable, and some of the material is customizable.

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu-resources/php/toolkit/index.html>

[Click here to access the December Spotlighted Observance](#) – Prevent the Seasonal Flu. This document is a ready-to-distribute flyer for your employees and colleagues.

#### **Additional Resources:**

[Healthy Habits to Help Protect Against Flu](#)

[Key Facts about Flu](#)