

Merchandising and Marketing Tips for the 2016-17 Flu Season

by Gabe Trahan



Millions of Americans will catch the flu this year and next. That number will easily be trumped by the number of Americans who will do their best to steer clear of getting it. Do your customers a great service: offer different ways to avoid the flu and ways to find relief from flu symptoms.

END-CAPS

Create a minimum of two end-caps: one for flu prevention and one for symptom relief. Do not try to duplicate your cough, cold and flu section. Instead, use the end-caps to highlight products you wish to promote. Triple-face each item on the shelves (such as three of the same items featured side by side). This is a valuable opportunity to promote your private label products. Consider one facing of the brand item alongside two facings of the associated private label item. Place the brand name product to the left of the first facing of the private label item.

- **Products for Prevention End-Cap:** Include items such as hand sanitizers, CDC-approved masks, disposable gloves, disinfecting wipes, toothbrushes, antiviral facial tissues, disinfectant sprays and surface cleansers, antibacterial soap, homeopathic immune boosters, time-release vitamin C, and germ-fighting mouthwashes.
- **Products for Relief End-Cap:** Choose a selection of flu symptom relief formulations in tablets, gel caps, powder mixes, liquids, lozenges, and/or nasal sprays. Consider daytime, nighttime, and combination day and nighttime relief. Have a wide choice of thermometers on hand.

Mark your calendar: **Dec. 7-13** is both National Influenza Vaccination Week and National Handwashing Awareness Week. Use this information to establish themes for end-caps in late November/early December.

SIGNS

These are a must-have! Signs are the most important item that you can display because they promote customer awareness and action.

- **Sample Prevention Messages:**
Avoid the Flu!—Start Fighting the Flu Now, Wash Your Hands Often.
Wipe Down Household Surfaces!—Protect Yourself and Your Family from the Flu.
Throw Away Those Germs!—Time for a New Toothbrush.
- **Sample Symptom Relief Messages:**
Flu Symptom Relief Center—Flu Relief, It's Smart to Have it on Hand!
Buy Now and Hope You Never Need It—No one likes to shop when they have the flu!

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

- **Remind customers in store and on your website** that it is important when sick with the flu to drink clear fluids such as water, broth, sports drinks, or electrolyte beverages to prevent dehydration.
- **Homeopathy** items such as Oscillococcinum are becoming increasingly more popular each year. Customers may be searching for natural remedies such as Sambucol Black Elderberry, garlic, echinacea, and ginseng supplements.
- **Traditional brand-name items to carry:** DayQuil, Mucinex, Delsym, Contac, Robitussin, Theraflu, Alka Seltzer Plus, Triaminic, Tylenol, Motrin, Advil, Zicam, Airborne, Tylenol Cold & Flu Severe, NyQuil Cold & Flu, Alka-Seltzer Plus Flu Formula, Coricidin HBP Cold & Flu, Vicks DayQuil Cold & Flu, Contac Cold + Flu and **private label items**. Even small stores should maintain at least five of each item.
- **Checkout counters:** Your impulse display should stock hand sanitizers along with a larger poster suggesting flu prevention tips.

Good luck and stay healthy this flu season. ■

Gabe Trahan is NCPA's senior director of store operations and marketing. Visit www.ncpanet.org/feo to watch videos, read tips, and view galleries of photo examples by Gabe. Follow him on Twitter @NCPAGabe for additional tips.