
Influenza (Flu)

What You Need to Know



What is flu?

Flu is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

Who can get flu?

People in all age groups can get the flu. Those at high risk for developing complications include children under the age of 2, pregnant women, adults over the age of 65, and those who have a chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, HIV, diabetes and/or asthma.

How is flu spread?

The flu virus is spread from person to person by airborne droplets produced through sneezing, coughing, and speaking. The virus can live on surfaces for up to 8 hours at room temperature. Sometimes people become infected by touching objects with the flu virus on it, then touching their mouth or nose. You cannot become infected by receiving the flu vaccine.

What are the symptoms of flu?

Symptoms usually start suddenly with fever, headache, body aches, fatigue, cough, runny nose, chills and sore throat.

How long after exposure do symptoms first begin?

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after exposure.

How long is a person contagious?

Infected people may be contagious **1 day prior** to becoming ill and up to **5 to 7 days after** becoming ill.

Is flu dangerous?

Flu can be life threatening. Most people have a fever for 3-4 days and other symptoms that last longer. However, some people may develop more serious complications including pneumonia.

Is there a treatment for flu?

Prescription drugs called antiviral agents can be used to treat the flu. Children and teens with flu should not be given aspirin or aspirin products because of the risk of developing Reye's Syndrome. Talk to your child's doctor about what over-the-counter medications are recommended for use. If you are sick, stay home, rest and drink lots of fluids.

How can flu be prevented?

- Get the flu shot every year.
- Avoid contact with sick people whenever possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing, sneezing or touching common surfaces like door knobs, keyboards and telephones. You can also use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Can you still get the flu even if you get a flu shot?

A flu shot can protect you against the flu, but it is not 100% protective against all strains. However, your symptoms will likely be less severe if you receive the vaccine.

HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use soap and running water
- Rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- Wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- Rinse well
- Dry hands with a paper towel
- Turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands



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