

Seasonal Influenza

Knowing the facts



Every year in the United States, on average 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu; more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and; about 36,000 people die from flu. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications.



Did You Know?

Colds are caused by different viruses than the flu. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations— while flu does often have complications.

How is influenza spread?

Influenza is spread to others by droplets that are expelled during sneezing and coughing, and by direct contact with nasal and throat secretions of infected persons. You can spread flu to others shortly before you start having symptoms and about 5 days after your symptoms stop.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Fever (usually high), Headache, Extreme tiredness, Dry cough, Sore throat, Runny or stuffy nose, Muscle aches, Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults. These symptoms are usually referred to as "flu-like symptoms."

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms commonly appear 1-4 days after the virus enters the body.

When and for how long is a person able to spread influenza?

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 days **after** becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than seven days

What is the treatment for influenza?

Treatment usual involves supportive care— fluids, rest, or over the counter medications for symptoms. Check with your healthcare provider before given over the counter cough and cold medications to young children

How do I prevent the spread of influenza?

- The best way to prevent getting the flu is by getting vaccinated each year against it. Some people can even get a vaccine through a mist in the nose— check with your healthcare provider to see if they have this kind of vaccine.
- Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent spread of infectious diseases. Help children to wash hands as well.
- Practice good cough and sneeze habits by coughing and sneezing into your elbow or sleeve. If you do use a tissue throw it away and wash your hands. Encourage children not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay home and away from others as much as possible when you are ill to prevent others from getting sick too.
- Remember that serious illness from the flu is more likely in certain groups of people including people 65 and older, pregnant women, people with certain chronic medical conditions and young children.
- Consult your doctor early on for the best treatment, but also be aware of emergency warning signs that require urgent medical attention.