

# FLU

## PREVENTION & TREATMENT



## What is flu?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

## What are the symptoms and complications of flu?

Symptoms of flu include a high fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, extreme tiredness, muscle aches, vomiting, diarrhea, and shortness of breath. Usually the symptoms have a sudden onset. Complications of flu include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

## How does flu spread?

Flu is contracted by inhaling respiratory droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. A person can also become infected by touching an object contaminated by flu virus (possibly from a hand that covered a sneeze) and then touching his/her mouth, nose or eyes. A person is contagious from one day before getting symptoms up to seven days after getting sick.



## What can be done to prevent spreading or getting flu?

Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, and wiping or blowing your nose.

- Use paper tissues when wiping or blowing your nose and throw them away after use.
- Cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow instead of into your bare hand.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes as germs enter the body through these openings.
- Stay home if you have flu symptoms until you are fever-free without fever medicine for 24 hours.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay away from crowds, if possible.
- Get a flu shot.

## Who should get a flu shot?

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot each fall. This includes pregnant women.



## When is the best time to get a flu shot?

Flu shots may be given from the time the vaccine becomes available in the fall until the end of the flu season. It takes about 2 weeks from the time the shot is given for you to develop maximum protection.

## Why do I need a flu shot every year?

Each spring, the strains of flu virus in the seasonal flu vaccine are adjusted to prevent flu from the viral strains most anticipated to cause illness during the next flu season. Even when the strains in the vaccine are the same as in the previous year's vaccine, a flu shot is recommended because your body's level of immunity from last year's flu shot has declined and may not protect you from getting sick this season.

## Can I get flu from a flu shot?

No, the viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot.

## What are the side effects that might occur from a flu shot?

The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site. Sometimes, a low grade fever and aches occur after a flu shot. These symptoms usually last only one or two days.





## **What can I do if I think I have caught the flu?**

See your physician as soon as possible. He or she can perform a simple test to determine whether or not you have the flu. Your doctor may prescribe anti-viral flu medication for you if you have the flu. The medication may reduce the duration of your illness if you begin taking it within 48 hours of the onset of your symptoms.

## **Where can I get more information about flu and flu vaccine?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) is an excellent source of information about flu.

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