

Influenza and the Vaccine(Shot) to Prevent It

What is Influenza?

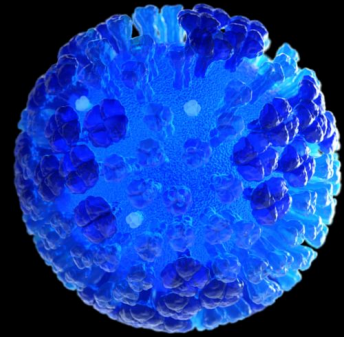
- ❖ Influenza (Flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs.
- ❖ Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu is different from a cold. Flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:
 - fever* or feeling feverish/chills
 - cough
 - sore throat
 - runny or stuffy nose
 - muscle or body aches
 - headaches
 - fatigue (tiredness)
 - some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

How Does the Flu Spread?

- ❖ Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes.
- ❖ People with flu are most contagious in the first three to four days after their illness begins. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Children and some people with weakened immune systems may pass the virus for longer than 7 days.
- ❖ Symptoms can begin about 2 days (but can range from 1 to 4 days) after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those people may still spread the virus to others.

The best way to prevent influenza is by getting vaccinated each year.



How to Prevent the Flu?



Get Vaccinated Preventive Steps Treatment

Get Vaccinated

Who Needs a Flu Vaccine?

- ❖ Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every season with rare exceptions.
- ❖ Flu vaccination has important benefits. It can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. The Flu vaccine also has been shown to be life-saving in children. In fact, a 2017 [study](#) showed that flu vaccination can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from flu.

When Should I Get Vaccinated?

- ❖ You should get a flu vaccine before flu viruses begin spreading in your community since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against flu. Make plans to get vaccinated early in fall, before flu season begins. CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of October. Getting vaccinated later, however, can still be beneficial and vaccination should continue to be offered throughout the flu season, even into January or later.

Preventive Steps

What Are Some Everyday Preventive Actions to Stop the Spread of Germs?

- ❖ Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- ❖ While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- ❖ If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- ❖ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- ❖ Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ❖ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ❖ Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

Treatment

Can Flu be Treated?

- ❖ Yes. There are prescription medications called “antiviral drugs” that can be used to treat flu illness. CDC recommends prompt treatment for people who have flu infection or suspected flu infection and who are at high risk of serious flu complications, such as people with asthma, diabetes (including gestational diabetes), or heart disease.
 - Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
 - Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.



Should I still get a flu vaccine?

- ❖ Yes. Antiviral drugs are not a substitute for getting a flu vaccine. While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works, a flu vaccine is the best way to help prevent seasonal flu and its potentially serious complications. Antiviral drugs are a second line of defense that can be used to treat flu if you get sick.



Talk to your doctor or nurse about Influenza (flu) Vaccines, or visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>