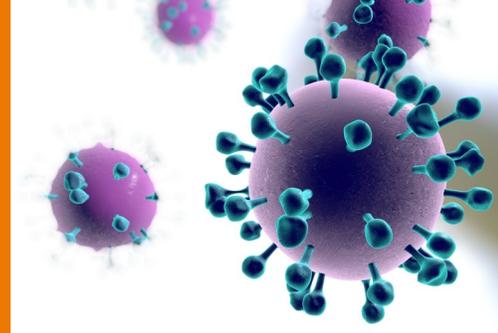


# INFLUENZA (FLU)



Flu is an illness caused by the influenza virus. Flu goes around every year, with some years being worse than others. In the U.S. it is more common in the fall and winter. People of all ages can get the flu, from babies and young adults, to the elderly. Some people get very sick and others do not. Many of the people who get very sick are older than 65 years or have a medical condition such as: diabetes, heart disease, asthma, kidney disease, or are pregnant. People who live in long-term care facilities and children younger than 5 years of age are also at greater risk. It is important to remember that young, healthy people can also become very sick.

## How is it spread?

- ▶ People with the flu can spread it to others when they cough or sneeze. The virus is found in droplets from the throat and nose. When someone coughs or sneezes, those droplets can be breathed in by people around them.
- ▶ The virus can also spread when someone touches an object with the virus on it. If that person then uses their hands to touch their face, mouth, or eyes, the virus can make them sick.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

*Symptoms usually start 1-4 days after breathing in flu virus droplets. Severe complications from the flu are pneumonia, hospitalization, and death.*

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Runny or stuffy nose
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Body aches
- ▶ Tiredness
- ▶ Sore throat

## What are the treatment options?

- ▶ Antibiotics do not work against the flu. Most people with the flu will get better on their own without any medicine. Taking pain relievers, getting extra rest, and drinking fluids can help lessen symptoms.
- ▶ Prescription medications called influenza antivirals can help treat the flu. These drugs can help you feel better faster and make the symptoms less intense. For these drugs to work best, they need to be started within two days after you get sick with the flu.

## How can it be prevented?

- ▶ **The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu shot each fall.** This shot is safe for those 6 months of age and older.
- ▶ Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if you do not have soap and water.
- ▶ Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, and then throw the tissue away. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- ▶ Do not share anything you put in your mouth, such as drinking cups, straws, or eating utensils.
- ▶ Stay home from work or school if you are feeling sick to not spread the flu to others.

