

The Flu



Influenza, more commonly known as the flu, is a contagious illness caused by a virus that affects the upper respiratory system (nose, mouth, sinuses, and throat). The flu virus spreads easily from person to person and can live on surfaces for hours. The flu season occurs every year from October to May and affects up to 20 percent of the U.S. population.

What are symptoms of the flu?

- High fever (100°F and above)
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches or pain
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache
- Lack of energy
- May cause diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting

Who's at most risk?

CDC reports that children under the age of 18 are most likely to get sick from influenza, while those 65 and older are least likely to get sick.

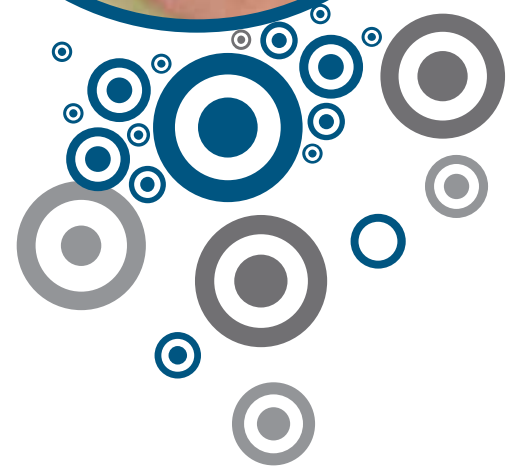
How does the flu spread?

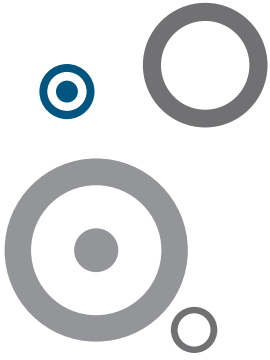
The flu spreads easily from person to person. It can be "caught" by:

- Breathing airborne droplets of the flu virus from others' coughs or sneezes
- Touching virus-contaminated surfaces (tables, doorknobs, phones) and then touching your nose, mouth, or eyes with virus-contaminated hands

Prevention

1. Get an annual flu shot before the flu season starts.
2. Avoid close contact. Stay 3-6 feet away from others who are sick.
3. Stay home and avoid contact with other people except to





get medical care (CDC) or for other necessities, until your fever is below 100 °F for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.*

4. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after using it.
5. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Only use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when water is not available.
6. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to help prevent the spread of germs.
7. Practice healthy habits.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school.
 - Eat nutritious food with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
 - Be physically active at least 30 minutes of activity most days of the week.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Manage your stress.
 - Drink plenty of fluids.

What do you do if you get sick?

- Stay home and rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids (water, juice, electrolyte drinks).
- Take over-the-counter medications to ease symptoms.
- Antiviral medications are available by prescription from your doctor.**
- Run a cool-mist humidifier. Clean it regularly according to the instruction manual to prevent mold.
- Get advice from a reputable website, such as <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

When should you see a doctor?

- A young child, pregnant woman, elderly person, or someone with a chronic health condition becomes ill with the flu—they have an increased chance of flu complications
- A stiff neck develops along with fever
- Complications, such as difficulty breathing or signs of dehydration occur
- Symptoms worsen each day
- You are concerned and need advice

For more information for those at high risk of flu complications, please visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/treating-influenza.pdf>

* Fever-reducing medicines include Acetaminophen (Tylenol, generic brand), Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, generic brand), and aspirin. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20 years old because of the danger of Reye's syndrome, a rare but serious illness.

** To be effective, take antiviral medications within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms. Antiviral medications are recommended for people with a high risk of having flu complications.

For more information about the flu, visit the Texas Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) website at texashelp.tamu.edu.

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