

Influenza: What You Need To Know

This information is for education only. It is not medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before following any medical treatment to see if it is safe and effective for you.

Influenza (the flu) is an infection caused by the influenza virus. The flu is easily spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or has close contact with others.

You can spread the flu to others for 1 week or longer after signs or symptoms appear.

Things That Increase Your Risk for The Flu

- Living with or caring for someone who has the flu
- Living in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Living in close quarters with others
- A medical condition such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or lung disease
- Pregnancy
- Age older than 50 years
- A weak immune system caused by HIV, AIDS, an organ transplant, or another condition
- Traveling to places where other people have the flu

Signs and Symptoms of the Flu

- Fever and chills
- Headaches
- Body aches, and muscle or joint pain
- Cough, runny nose, and sore throat
- Hard time breathing
- Loss of appetite (not feeling hungry)
- Throwing up or feeling like you want to throw up
- Diarrhea (watery stools)
- Being Tired

How to Manage Symptoms

- **Rest** as much as you can to help you recover.
- **Drink liquids as directed** to help prevent dehydration. Ask how much liquid to drink each day and what liquids are best for you.

Knowing if You Have the Flu

Your doctor will give you an exam and ask if you have other health conditions. Tell your doctor if you have been around sick people, have traveled recently, or if you are pregnant.

A fluid sample may be taken from your nose or throat to be tested for the flu virus.

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Treatment For the Flu

Most people get better within a week. You may need any of the following:

- **Acetaminophen** lessens pain and fever. You can get this medicine without a doctor's order. Ask how much to take and how often to take it. Follow directions.

Read the labels of all medicines you take to see if they have acetaminophen, or ask your doctor or pharmacist. Acetaminophen can cause liver damage if not taken correctly. Do not use more than 4 grams (4,000 milligrams) total of acetaminophen in one day.

- **NSAIDs**, such as ibuprofen, help decrease swelling, pain, and fever. You can get this medicine with or without a doctor's order.

NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding or kidney problems in some people. If you take blood thinner medicine, **always** ask your doctor if NSAIDs are safe for you. Always read the medicine label and follow the directions.

- **Antivirals** help fight a viral infection.

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Talk about treatment options with your doctor to decide what care you want to have. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

When to Call 911 or Your Doctor

Call 911 if:

- You have trouble breathing, and your lips look purple or blue.
- You have a seizure.
- You have new pain or pressure in your chest.

Call Your Doctor if:

- You are dizzy, or you are urinating (peeing) less or not at all.
- Have a headache with a stiff neck, and you feel tired or confused.
- Your symptoms, such as shortness of breath, throwing up, or watery stools (diarrhea), get worse.
- Your symptoms, such as fever or cough, seem to get better, but then get worse.
- You have new muscle pain or weakness.
- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

Viral Illness: What You Need To Know

How to Prevent Spreading a Viral Illness

Wash your hands often with soap and water.

- After you use the bathroom, change a child's diapers, or sneeze.
- Before you prepare or eat food.
- If you do not have soap and water, use gel hand sanitizer with 60 percent alcohol.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth unless you have washed your hands first.

Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.

- Cough into a tissue or the bend of your arm.
- If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash right away and wash your hands.

Clean shared items with a germ-killing cleaner.

- Clean table surfaces, doorknobs, and light switches.
- Do not share towels, silverware, and dishes with people who are sick.
- Wash bed sheets, towels, silverware, and dishes with soap and water.

If you have a mask, wear it over your mouth and nose if you are sick.

- A face mask may help protect others from getting infected with the flu.
- Wearing a mask is important when you are in common areas of your home or if you go to your doctor's office or hospital.

Stay away from others if you are sick.

- Stay at home until 24 hours after your fever and symptoms are gone.

Influenza vaccine helps prevent influenza (flu).

- Everyone older than 6 months needs to get a yearly influenza vaccine.
- Get the vaccine as soon as possible. You can often get it by September or October each year.

Is it a Cold or the Flu

Signs and Symptoms	Cold	Flu
When Symptoms Start	Slowly	Fast
Fever	Rare	Often
Aches	A little	Often
Chills	Not Common	Very Common
Feeling Tired and Weak	Sometimes	Often
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Chest Pain and Cough	Mild to Moderate	Common
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Headache	Rare	Common

How to Wash Your Hands

1 WET HANDS

2 APPLY SOAP

3 RUB HANDS PALM TO PALM

4 LATHER THE BACKS OF YOUR HANDS

5 SCRUB BETWEEN YOUR FINGERS

6 RUB THE BACKS OF FINGERS ON THE OPPOSING PALMS

7 CLEAN THUMBS

8 WASH FINGERNAILS AND FINGERTIPS

9 RINSE HANDS

10 DRY WITH A SINGLE USE TOWEL

11 USE THE TOWEL TO TURN OFF THE FAUCET

12 YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN

How to Use Hand Sanitizer

APPLY THE PRODUCT ON THE PALM OF ONE HAND

RUB HANDS TOGETHER

COVER ALL SURFACES UNTIL HANDS FEEL DRY (20 SEC)