

# FIGHT THE FLU



**What is influenza (also called flu)?**

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is getting a flu vaccine each year.

**How does flu spread?**

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by 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 may also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

**Symptoms of flu**

People who have the 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 (Very tired)

**Period of contagiousness**

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. Most adults may be able to infect others a day before symptoms appear and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. Some people especially children and people with weakened immune systems might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

**Complications of flu**

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

**Preventing seasonal flu: Get vaccinated**

The single best way to prevent getting flu is to vaccinate each season.

**What is the "flu shot"?**

It is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed viruses) that is given with a needle.

**Will I still get flu?**

Two weeks after vaccination, you will develop antibodies, which will help protect you against influenza virus infection. Flu vaccines will not protect against flu-like illness caused by non-influenza viruses.

The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against 2009 H1N1 and two other influenza viruses (an H3N2 virus and an influenza B virus).

**Who should not be vaccinated against seasonal flu?**

Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. They include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccine previously
- People who developed Guillain-Barre syndrome within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously
- Children younger than 6 months of age
- People, who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever, should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

**When is the best time to get a Flu vaccination?**

Because flu seasons vary in length and severity, you may go for your flu shot as soon as the vaccine is available and throughout the entire season.

