

What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness with two main types, A and B, caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of the flu include: fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (tiredness), vomiting, and diarrhea.

How long does the flu last?

Flu symptoms can start 1-4 days after exposure to the virus, on average. Symptoms typically last 3-7 days.

How is the flu spread?

Influenza is spread through tiny **droplets** from when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk spread the virus when it lands in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less commonly, a person can also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it, then later touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

Who is at risk for flu infection?

Everyone can catch the flu, but those at highest risk of serious outcomes include adults 65 years and older, pregnant women, children younger than 5 years of age especially those younger than 2 years of age, adult with chronic disease, persons with disability, racial and ethnic minority groups, and immunosuppressed individuals.

What preventive measures and treatments are available?

Getting vaccinated annually is the best way to reduce the risk of flu infection and its complications. Influenza vaccine is recommended for all individuals ages 6 months and older. However, once a person is exposed or infected antiviral drugs can minimize symptoms severity and complications such as pneumonia when treatment is started early.

What should schools do?

Encourage good hygiene, including:

- Appropriate handwashing with soap and water, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available. Encourage handwashing after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Not touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, with dirty hands.



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Influenza

- Wearing gloves when handling respiratory secretions or objects contaminated with respiratory secretions of any patient.
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects including toys, and doorknobs.
- Avoiding close physical contact, when sick by:
 - Staying at home while sick
 - Avoiding hugging, kissing or shaking hands,
 - Moving away from people before coughing or sneezing,
- Coughing and sneezing into a tissue and then throwing it away, or coughing and sneezing into the upper sleeve, completely covering the mouth and nose.

What are recommendations for exclusion?

Exclude individuals with flu from daycare or school until they have been fever free for 24 hours.

For more information, visit [CDC's Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine](#) or [CDC Flu Season](#)

