

Influenza— “The Flu”

2008–2009 Season Update

Prevention and Treatment of Influenza Infection

What is “the flu”?

The flu is a type of germ (called a **virus**) that you breathe in. It can get into the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu is also called influenza (in-floo-EN-zuh).

How do I know if I have the flu?

The flu usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- fever (usually high)
- chills
- muscle aches
- weakness
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- headache
- red or itchy eyes
- dry cough
- tiredness (can be extreme)
- diarrhea (especially children)

What is the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine can protect you against some types of flu virus. There are two forms:

- The flu “shot” is usually given in the arm. The flu shot cannot make you sick with the flu.
- The flu nasal spray is a mist that you breathe in through your nose. The nasal spray can be given to healthy people who are between the ages of 2 and 49 years.



If you are allergic to eggs, speak to your healthcare provider before getting a flu vaccine. These vaccines are usually available in September and continue to be available until March or April, when the flu season ends.

Who should receive a flu vaccine?

- All people 50 years of age and older
- Women *who will be* pregnant during the flu season
- Caregivers of infants less than 6 months
- All children 6 months to 18 years old
- Adults and children 2 years of age or older with the following:
 - chronic lung disease (including emphysema and asthma)
 - chronic heart disease (except high blood pressure)
 - chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes)
 - kidney disease
 - hepatic (liver) disease
 - blood disorders (including sickle cell anemia)
 - those with weakened immune systems

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- such as those with HIV/AIDS or those who are immunosuppressed from chronic steroids, chemotherapy or radiation therapy
- children and teenagers who take daily aspirin therapy
- caregivers, who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

Note: this list only provides examples of conditions for which the flu vaccine is recommended. Your healthcare provider may want you to have a flu shot for other conditions.

What can I do to prevent the flu?

- Wash your hands often and well. Use soap and water or a hand cleaner
- Avoid being near people who are sick
- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep good control of medical problems, such as asthma
- Don't smoke and avoid being around any tobacco smoke
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, and throw away the tissue afterward.

What if I have the flu?

- Treat signs of flu with medicines that relieve pain and fever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil). Never give a child aspirin without first speaking to your healthcare provider.
- Ask your healthcare provider about prescription medicines that can help your flu symptoms. These medicines have to be started soon after the flu starts in order to help.
- Rest as much as possible
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent spreading germs.

- Stay home from work or school to keep from giving others the flu.
- Seek medical care immediately if you experience any of the following signs:
 - difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - pain/pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - sudden dizziness
 - confusion
 - severe vomiting that does not go away

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Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

Additional Lung Health Information

American Thoracic Society

www.thoracic.org

American Lung Association

www.lungusa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/flu

World Health Organization

www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/

Health and Human Services

www.hhs.gov/flu/

Rx *What to do...*

- ✓ If you need a flu vaccine, get it as soon as possible. It is best to have the flu vaccine before December.
- ✓ Wash your hands often and well.
- ✓ Keep chronic diseases like asthma in good control.
- ✓ Keep your body healthy with diet, exercise and no smoking!
- ✓ If you think you have the flu, stay home and avoid contact with others. If you become very ill with the flu, contact your healthcare provider.

Healthcare Provider's Office Telephone:
