

# Flu Facts 2010

## What Is the Flu?

Influenza, or the flu, is an illness of the lungs and airways (respiratory system). It is caused by a virus. Flu viruses spread mainly by coughs and sneezes. The flu is highly contagious (easy to catch) and can be very serious.

Each year, more than 200,000 people in the United States are hospitalized because of the flu, and about 36,000 people die. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all people six months of age and older get the flu vaccine. Not only does it keep individuals from getting sick, it also helps prevent the spread of flu virus to other people.

## How Do I Know It Is the Flu?

Sudden onset of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Chills
- Body aches
- Sore throat
- Non-productive cough
- Headache
- Fatigue

Although diarrhea, vomiting, and feeling sick to the stomach can be caused by the flu (more commonly in children than adults), these symptoms are rare.

## Everyone Needs To Get Vaccinated for the Flu Every Year

Because flu viruses change a little bit from year to year, a new flu vaccine must be developed to match those changes. That is why it is important to get vaccinated for the flu **every year**. Flu vaccine is usually available in two forms:

1. As an **injection**
2. As a **nasal mist**

It takes up to two weeks for protection to develop after the vaccination. Protection lasts for about a year. You **cannot** get the flu from the vaccination.

Certain people are more likely to get very sick and need to go to the hospital when they get the flu. It is particularly critical for these people, and those who care for them, to get an annual flu vaccination. They are:

- People who are older than 65
- People with chronic medical conditions (such as lung or heart disease or diabetes)
- Children younger than five years (especially children under two years)
- Pregnant women
- Nursing home residents

In addition, it is important for people who are at risk of complications from the flu to seek prompt medical advice when they develop signs of flu-like illness.

## A Word about Pandemic Flu

From time to time, a new flu virus will emerge. This happened in 2009 with the H1N1 (swine flu) virus. The 2010/2011 flu vaccine protects against the 2009 H1N1 virus.



## How to Stop the Flu from Spreading

While vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu, other simple steps can help stop the spread of flu virus and other germs that make people sick.

- Stay home from work or school if you have symptoms of the flu!
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing.

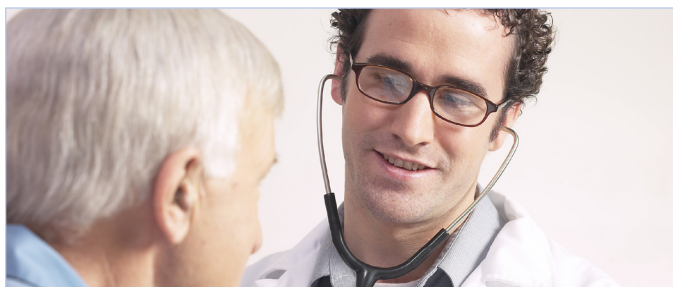


- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

### **If You Are Sick, Stay Home**

Anyone who is sick with the flu should stay home. Sick children and teens should be kept home. They should not be allowed to go to school, to the mall or other public places, or to visit friends. Even people who are only mildly ill and don't have other medical problems should stay home and rest.

Most people will get over the flu at home by getting plenty of bed rest, drinking lots of fluids, and taking pain relievers to reduce fever and body aches. They will not need testing or treatment.



### **When to Seek Medical Help**

Some people get very sick with flu and may require hospitalization. It is extremely important for anyone who becomes sick with flu-like illness to seek medical treatment if his or her symptoms are:

- Very severe
- Quickly worsen
- Improve, but return with a worse cough or fever

### **What to Watch for**

If you or a child in your household becomes sick and exhibits any of these warning signs, seek emergency medical care immediately.

#### **For children:**

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

#### **For adults:**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

### **Steps to Stay Healthy**

To protect your health:

- ✓ Get vaccinated every year.
- ✓ Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.
- ✓ Wash your hands properly and often.
- ✓ Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- ✓ If possible, stay six feet away from sick people.
- ✓ Eat a healthy diet, get plenty of rest, and exercise regularly.

*The information provided on this fact sheet is intended for your general knowledge only and is not a substitute for any medical advice or treatment from a health care professional.*



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