



JUST THE FACTS



INFLUENZA (THE FLU)

What are the symptoms?

Sudden onset of...

- Headache
- Chills
- Cough
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Sore throat

In children...

- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea may be present.

How is it spread?

Airborne

- Spread by droplets in the air (an infected person coughs or sneezes germs into the air).

Indirect contact

- Spread by touching objects that are contaminated with the germs. The virus can live on objects or surfaces for for several hours.

When and how long is a person contagious?

People infected with the germs are typically contagious (able to spread germs) the day before symptoms begin until approximately 5 days after the start of the illness. Children and people with a weakened immune system may be contagious for even longer. That means you can give someone the flu before you even know you're sick as well as once you've developed symptoms.

What are the complications?

Most people recover from the flu in about a week. However, serious complications can be associated with the flu. Complications of the flu can include pneumonia, sinus infections, ear infections, dehydration and febrile seizures, or worsening of underlying conditions such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes. Individuals who may be at a higher risk of developing complications due to the flu include:

- Young children.
- Women who are pregnant.
- Adults 65 years or older.
- People who have a weakened immune system.
- People who have a chronic medical condition such as diabetes or heart disease.
- People who live in a nursing home, chronic care, or long-term care facility.

WHAT IS... THE FLU?

Influenza (the flu) is a virus that causes an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs.

Symptoms start one to three days after exposure.

What should I do if I get the flu?

If you get sick from the flu but are otherwise generally healthy, your body's immune system should be able to fight off the flu virus on its own. To help your body, make sure that you get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and eat healthy foods. For some people, the flu can be more serious, so medications called antivirals can be prescribed by a health care provider. These medications should be started within 48 hours of when the symptoms start and can reduce the risk of serious complications.

Preventing the flu

Some ways to help prevent getting and spreading the flu are:

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap often.
- Use alcohol-based hand gel.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. These habits spread germs.
- Stay home from work and school if you get sick with a flu-like illness.
- If you have flu symptoms, try to avoid direct contact with others, so there's less chance you'll make them sick too.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into the inside of your elbow if you don't have a tissue.
- Throw tissues in the garbage immediately after use and wash your hands.
- Clean objects that are touched often such as door knobs, light switches, toys, and phones.
- Young children and people with a weak immune system or chronic illness should avoid crowds when possible.

Get your flu shot every year in the fall to give yourself maximum protection throughout the flu season.



For more information.

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References:

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