

# Influenza (Flu)

## What is influenza?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Influenza can cause complications in young children, older people, and people with certain health conditions. There are two main types of influenza, Types A and B. Influenza routinely spreads in people in the fall and winter months each year, however, it is possible to become infected with the flu any time of the year.

## What are the signs and symptoms of influenza?

Common flu symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue. Symptoms usually come on suddenly. Some people may also experience vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults. It is important to note that not everyone with the flu will experience a fever.

## How is influenza transmitted?

Flu viruses spread mainly through droplets created by coughing, talking or sneezing. People with influenza can spread it to others up to 6 feet away for up to 3-4 days **before** their illness starts. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby, or can be inhaled into the lungs. It is also possible to contract the flu by touching surfaces that have flu virus on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

## How can we prevent influenza?

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every season, especially those at higher risk. Everyday preventative measures include washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, covering your coughs and sneezes, stay home if you are sick, and avoid close contact with those who are ill. During flu season, it is also a good idea to routinely disinfect commonly touched surfaces in your home, such as door knobs, countertops, and faucets.

## How is influenza treated?

Sometimes, antiviral drugs are prescribed to lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick. They also can prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia. Typically, flu symptoms can be treated at home. It is recommended to stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing medications. Consult with your medical provider for any symptom that is severe or concerning.

For more information, visit [www.CDC.gov/flu](http://www.CDC.gov/flu)

