



Influenza

The flu virus spreads easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. When a sick person coughs or sneezes near you, you can breathe in droplets that have the virus. Less often, a person might get the flu from coming in contact with a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or eyes.

Teach your family the importance of these habits and have them practice now. These actions can help you stay healthy now and help protect you and your family during flu season or during a pandemic.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If there is no soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand gel. Wash your hands before eating, drinking, or touching your face.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a trash can and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

The flu usually begins with the rapid-onset of a high fever and body aches. Be aware of other common flu symptoms:

- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea (more common in children than adults)
- NOTE: having all of the symptoms doesn't always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses have similar symptoms.

Diagnosing the flu:

It may be difficult to tell if you are suffering from the flu or another illness. Your health care provider may be able to tell you if you have the flu. If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about possible complications, consult your health care provider. Potential risks and serious complications of the flu:

- Bacterial pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions
- Ear infections
- Sinus problems

You are at an increased risk for flu-related complications if you are:

- Age 50 or older
- Pregnant
- Living with a chronic medical condition
- A child, age 6 months and older
- Living with or caring for anyone at high risk
- If you are at high risk, have your vaccinations updated every year, as directed by your physician.

What should I do if someone in my household is sick?

- Designate one person as the caregiver.
- Keep everyone's personal items separate. All household members should avoid sharing pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils unless cleaned between uses.
- Disinfect doorknobs, switches, handles, computers, telephones, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.
- Wash everyone's dishes in the dishwasher or by hand using very hot water and soap.
- Wash everyone's clothes in a standard washing machine as you normally would. Use detergent and very hot water and wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves when in contact with or cleaning up body fluids.

Know the Difference: Types of Flu Outbreaks

- Seasonal Flu — A contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza (flu) viruses occurring every year. It affects an average of 5 percent to 20 percent of the U.S. population by causing mild to severe illness, and in some instances can lead to death.
- Epidemic — The rapid spread of a disease that affects some or many people in a community or region at the same time.
- Pandemic — An outbreak of a disease that affects large numbers of people throughout the world and spreads rapidly.
- H1N1 Influenza (swine flu) — H1N1 influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that cause regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get H1N1 influenza, but human infections can and do happen. H1N1 influenza viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person.
- Avian Influenza — Commonly known as bird flu, this strain of influenza virus is naturally occurring in birds. Wild birds can carry the virus and may not get sick from it; however, domestic birds may become infected by the virus and often die from it.

The Hazard-Specific Information section was created using information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and American Red Cross.