

## People at High Risk

If you (or your child) have a high risk factor listed below and develop flu symptoms, consult a health care provider to get advice about seeking medical care. Also, it's possible for otherwise healthy people to develop severe illness, so anyone concerned about their illness should consult their medical provider.

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 65 and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who have:
  - Asthma
  - Neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability, moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury].
  - Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
  - Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
  - Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
  - Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
  - Kidney disorders
  - Liver disorders
  - Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
  - Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
- People younger than 19 years old who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Adults with extreme obesity (Body Mass Index, or BMI, of 40 or greater). Obesity may also be a risk factor for children. Childhood obesity is defined as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile, for age and sex.

## Emergency Warning Signs of Flu

Most people are able to recover at home from flu without medical care. However, some people are at high risk of developing serious flu complications. There are “emergency warning signs” that should signal anyone to seek medical care urgently.

### Emergency Warning Signs In Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish lips or face
- Ribs pulling in with each breath
- Chest pain
- Severe muscle pain (child refuses to walk)
- Dehydration (no urine for 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears when crying)
- Not alert or interacting when awake
- Seizures
- Fever above 104°F
- In children less than 12 weeks, any fever
- Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

### Emergency Warning Signs In Adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Persistent dizziness, confusion, inability to arouse
- Seizures
- Not urinating
- Severe muscle pain
- Severe weakness or unsteadiness
- Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions



# Flu & You

Influenza (flu) is a contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization.

### How severe is illness associated with flu?

Flu illness can range from mild to severe depending on different factors like the virus involved and the age and health of the person who has been infected. While flu can make anyone sick, certain people are at high risk for developing serious complications that can result in hospitalization or death. This includes older adults, young children, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term health problems including as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

However even healthy children and adults can get very sick from flu and spread it to friends, co-workers, and family. In the United States, millions of people have to visit the doctor because of flu and hundreds of thousands are hospitalized from flu complications each year.

### How does flu spread?

Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. A person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own eyes, mouth or nose.

**#FIGHT FLU**

For more information, visit  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>  
or call  
**800-CDC-INFO**



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention



## CDC Recommends a Three-Step Approach to **Fight Flu:**

**#1**

### A flu vaccine is the first and most important step in helping to protect against flu and its potentially serious complications.

- While there are many different flu viruses, flu vaccines protect against the viruses that research suggests will be most common.
- Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as reduce the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death.
- Vaccination also has been shown to not only help protect a pregnant woman from flu, but to also protect her baby for the first several months after birth.
- Flu vaccination varies in how well it works and some people who get vaccinated may still get sick, but several studies have shown that vaccination reduces severity of illness in those people.
- Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year before flu activity begins in their community. CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October.
- Vaccination of people at high risk from flu is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.

**#2**

### Take everyday actions to help reduce the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses.

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu symptoms, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever reducing medicine.

- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

**#3**

### Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

- If you get sick with flu, antiviral drugs can be used to treat your illness.
- Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
- Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For people with high risk factors, treatment with an antiviral drug can mean the difference between having a milder illness versus a very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay.
- CDC recommends prompt treatment for people who have flu infection or suspected flu infection and who are at high risk of serious flu complications.
- Studies show that flu antiviral drugs work best for treatment when they are started within 2 days of getting sick, but starting them later can still be helpful, especially if the sick person has a high risk factor or is very sick from flu. Follow your doctor's instructions for taking these drugs.

## If You Do Get Sick with Flu...

### Flu Symptoms can include:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting, though this is more common in children than adults

*\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever*

### What should I do if I get sick?

If you get flu symptoms, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible except to seek medical care. Most people are able to recover at home from flu without medical care. However, some people are at high risk of developing serious flu complications (see information under People at High Risk).

### How long can a sick person spread flu to others?

People with flu are most contagious in the first 3 to 4 days after their illness begins. Some otherwise healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others with flu viruses for an even longer time.

### How long should I stay home if I'm sick?

CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick. Continue to cover coughs and sneezes and wash hands even after you return to work. It is important to know that even if you don't have a fever, you may have flu and be contagious if you get flu symptoms.

