

# Flu Basics

## What is influenza?

Influenza (flu) is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death.

## 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. The influenza season typically runs from October through mid-May.

## What are the symptoms of flu?

- fever\*
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue
- sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

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

## What can I do to protect myself from getting sick from flu?

**Get vaccinated.** This is an important first step toward fighting seasonal flu. It helps protect you and others. Vaccine is available for children [6 months and older] and adults. The flu shot takes about two weeks to become effective.

**Keep your hands clean.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.

**Cover your cough and your sneeze.** Use a tissue or cover your mouth with your sleeve when you sneeze or cough. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

**Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

**Avoid close contact.** Especially with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

**Stay at home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.



Public Health