

# Influenza

Influenza, also called the flu, is an illness caused by a virus. It is easily spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing or close contact. You may become ill with the flu 1-4 days after being around people who have it. The peak flu season in the United States is from November to April.

## Signs

- Fever or chills
- Cough or sore throat
- Sore or aching muscles
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Earache
- Red, watery and sore eyes
- Feeling very tired

## Your Care

Your care may include:

- Taking medicine to treat the virus, diarrhea, fever, body aches or cough
- Resting
- Drinking at least 8-10 glasses of liquids each day
- Avoiding alcohol and tobacco
- Using a humidifier to help you breathe easier

## Preventing Influenza

- Wash your hands often, especially after blowing your nose.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then, wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid getting close to other people in public places such as schools, stores and churches if you have any signs of the flu.
- Get a flu vaccine or shot before the flu season each year.
- The flu shot is recommended for:

- People 50 years of age or older
  - People in nursing homes or chronic care facilities
  - Adults and children with weak immune systems. People with chronic conditions such as diabetes and diseases of the heart, kidneys and lungs
  - Children and teenagers who receive long-term aspirin therapy
  - Women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during flu season
  - Health care workers and caregivers of those who are at risk of getting the flu
  - All children 6-23 months of age
  - People caring for and those in contact with infants less than 2 years of age
- **The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu.** You may have mild side effects from the shot, such as arm soreness, slight fever and muscle aches.
  - **Do not** get the flu shot if you are allergic to eggs or have had an allergic reaction to a previous flu shot.
  - Contact your doctor or local health clinic for information about when and where to get a flu shot.

Call your doctor **right away** if you have:

- Chest pain or a deep cough with a lot of mucus.
- Trouble breathing. The flu can cause pneumonia.
- Severe neck pain or stiffness.
- Trouble thinking clearly.
- A fever that lasts more than 3-4 days or your temperature is over 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C.
- A temperature that keeps getting higher, even after taking medicine for it.
- Vomiting or diarrhea that lasts more than one day.
- Ear pain.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**

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