

Questions and Answers About...

What is influenza?

Influenza, commonly called “the flu”, is a virus that causes severe upper respiratory illness. Two recognized types (A and B) occur during the late fall and winter in the United States.

Influenza is a potentially serious disease and can make people of any age sick. Additionally, influenza-related complications such as pneumonia can affect those at increased risk, such as the elderly and those with certain chronic diseases.

How would I know if I had the flu?

The symptoms of influenza begin suddenly, about one to five days after you have been exposed to someone with the flu. Fever, chills, dry cough, sore throat, discomfort in the chest, headache, weakness, fatigue and muscle aches, are all symptoms of the flu.

What should I do if I get the flu?

Do not go to school or work, or put a child in child care with a fever, particularly if it is accompanied by a cough. Stay in bed, get plenty of rest, and drink lots of fluids. See a health care provider if a deep cough, pain in the chest, or long-lasting fever develop.

Drugs are now available to prevent the flu and/or lessen flu symptoms, but they must be prescribed by a health care provider and they must be started



within 48 hours of beginning symptoms. Additionally, not all medications work on both type A and B influenza.

Influenza

A health care provider should be consulted if symptoms begin - particularly if elderly or suffering from certain chronic diseases, or during an outbreak of influenza.

Aspirin should not be given to children under age 18 with flu-like symptoms. **Reye Syndrome, which affects the central nervous system and the liver, has been associated with aspirin use during certain viral illnesses.**



Can I get the flu more than once?

Yes. Because there are different influenza strains, you could become ill with one strain of influenza and recover, only to become ill with another strain of influenza in the same flu season!

You may have even been vaccinated and still become ill with the flu. In healthy adults under 65, the flu vaccine may be only 70%-90% effective in stopping influenza illness.

How can I prevent the spread of influenza?

Take advantage of the influenza vaccine available for use in the United States. See your local

County Health Department, or private health care provider each fall to receive an influenza vaccination if you are;

- * 65 years of age or older,
- * have chronic lung or heart disease,
- * require regular medical care for diabetes, kidney, blood or immune system diseases,

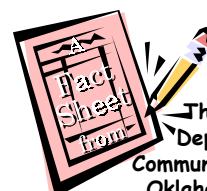
- * are on long-term aspirin therapy, or
- * if an influenza epidemic is identified.

If you belong to one of the high risk groups above, you should also ask your health care provider about receiving the pneumococcal vaccine as well.

Also, follow good hygiene practices;

- * Stay home if you have a fever, particularly if you are coughing or sneezing.
- * Cover your mouth AND nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze or cough and dispose of it immediately. DO NOT use a cloth handkerchief.
- * Wash your hands after you blow your nose, or a child's nose.
- * ALWAYS wash your hands well and often, whether you are sick or well, particularly after using the toilet or before preparing food of any kind!

Call your local county health department if you have any questions about influenza.



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