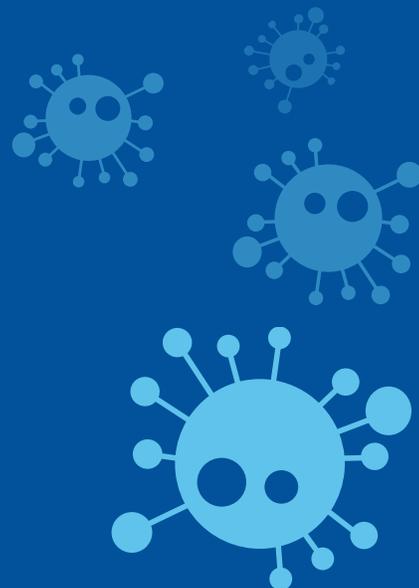


Understanding Influenza (Flu)



Influenza (flu) is a highly contagious viral infection that can cause mild to severe symptoms and life-threatening complications, including death, even in healthy children and adults.¹ Influenza viruses usually spread from one individual to another through coughing or sneezing. Less often, they can also spread through touching a contaminated surface and then touching the mouth, eyes, or nose. Individuals can pass flu on to others even before their own symptoms start and for a week or more after symptoms begin.

Flu Severity and Symptoms

The severity of each flu season varies depending on the specific viruses circulating. **The best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications is through annual flu vaccination** (recommended for everyone age 6 months and older).¹ Even in cases when flu vaccination does not prevent infection completely, flu vaccines can still provide protection by **reducing the severity and duration of disease**.²

Flu is not just a common cold. It usually comes on suddenly, and people with flu may have some or all of the following symptoms³:

- Fever
- Aches (muscle, body, and headaches)
- Chills
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Sudden onset
- Cough, runny or stuffy nose, and/or sore throat
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

Is it the flu? Think **F.A.C.T.S.**

F

Fever

A

Aches

C

Chills

T

Tiredness

S

Sudden onset

Impact of Flu

An individual's response to infection can be difficult to predict. Unlike many other viral respiratory infections, like the common cold, flu can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications. While some individuals experience only mild symptoms, influenza viruses may cause serious infection or even death in others.

Flu-related complications that can affect anyone include:

- Pneumonia
- Sinus infections
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, and heart disease
- Bronchitis
- Ear infections

Children younger than 5 years of age, adults age 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic health conditions are considered at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications.⁴

References

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National
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www.nfid.org/flu



While the numbers vary, in the US, millions of people are **sickened**, hundreds of thousands are **hospitalized**, and thousands or tens of thousands of people **die from flu every year**



Every year **flu affects employers and businesses** and costs the US approximately \$10.4 billion⁵ in direct costs for hospitalizations and outpatient visits for adults



During the 2017–2018 flu season, **vaccination prevented** approximately 7 million flu illnesses, 109,000 flu hospitalizations, and 8,000 flu deaths⁶

For more information about the burden of disease, visit: www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/burden.htm

Flu Prevention and Treatment

Since it is not possible to know in advance how severe a flu season will be or how sick an individual may get due to flu, prevention and treatment are critical. Annual flu vaccination is the first and best way to prevent flu. For more than 50 years, hundreds of millions of individuals in the US have safely received seasonal flu vaccines.⁷

Take 3 steps to help #FightFlu:



Get vaccinated against flu **every year** (everyone age 6 months and older)



Practice healthy habits like washing your hands, covering your coughs and sneezes, and staying home if you are sick



Take flu antiviral drugs if prescribed

References

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