

The Flu (Influenza)

T H E F L U

The flu is a contagious (catching) disease caused by a virus. It attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu is different from a cold and usually comes on with no warning signs.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- headache and muscle ache
- extreme tiredness

How can I catch the flu?

- The flu is passed from person to person by coughing and sneezing.

What can I do to prevent it?

- Get a flu vaccine!

Can the vaccine cause the flu?

- There are two types of flu vaccines that a person can get. One is a dead virus and it **does not** cause the flu. The other is a live virus that has been made weak so that any flu symptoms are also made weaker.

How well does the flu shot work?

- The shot prevents the flu in 70% to 90% of young, healthy adults.
- The shot doesn't do as well at *preventing* flu in the elderly and people with certain medical problems. But the shot does *reduce* the number of elderly who die or need a hospital stay because of the flu.

How well does the Flu Mist (spray) work?

- This new vaccine provides another option for protection against the flu. This new vaccine is for people age 5-49 years old. Children 5-8 years old need two doses at least 6 weeks apart in their first year of getting the Flu Mist, and people 9-49 need one dose.
- Flu Mist should not be given to people with asthma or other reactive airway diseases. The mist should not be given to children under the age of 5.

People who are allergic to eggs or who have had a reaction to the flu shot or vaccine should not be given the Flu Mist or any other flu vaccine.

The Flu (Influenza) - cont.

Who is at risk?

- Everyone is at risk of getting the flu.
- Some groups of people have a greater risk of getting sick from the virus. (See below.)

High-Risk Groups:

- People aged 65 years and older.
- Women who will be 6 to 9 months pregnant during the flu season.
- People who live in nursing homes and other health care facilities.
- Adults and children (aged 6 months and older) who have chronic heart or lung disease, including asthma.
- Adults and children (aged 6 months and older) who have diabetes, kidney problems, or blood disorders. Also those who have a weak immune system because of HIV, certain medicines, or treatment for cancer.
- Children and teens (aged 6 months to 18 years) that take aspirin for a long time.
- Health-care workers who have contact with people that may be infected with the flu.

How serious is the flu?

- Most people are over the flu in one or two weeks.
- Some might develop pneumonia (new-MOH-nyuh).
- Every year, about 200,000 people go to the hospital because they have the flu.
- Every year, about 36,000 people die of the flu.

What should I do if I get the flu?

- Get rest.
- Drink lots of water or fruit juice.
- Take aspirin* or acetaminophen (Tylenol) to get rid of pain and fever.

(* Note: Children with the flu should **NOT** take aspirin).

To Learn More...

Call the FDA at 1- 888-infoFDA (toll free 1-888-463-6332)
Visit <http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/antivirals/influenza/default.htm>