

Flu Season 2010

It is Flu Season—Get Vaccinated!

Highlights

- Combined H1N1 and Seasonal flu vaccine
- Injection and nasal spray available (check with your health care provider)
- You may infect others 1 day before and 5-7 days after being sick
- It can take up to two weeks for the antibodies to develop after being vaccinated

The best way to avoid getting the flu is by getting vaccinated every year. Get your flu shot now so that you are protected BEFORE the flu hits. Important information about this season's vaccine:

- ◆ The 2010 vaccine is currently available by mist (live) or injection (inactivated) in our offices. The nasal spray is more expensive and may not be available at all of our 10 offices. [The 2010 flu vaccine includes the 2009 H1N1 strain plus two seasonal flu strains, influenza A and B.](#)
- ◆ Protection against seasonal flu is especially important for the elderly and those with asthma and other chronic conditions. And protection against H1N1 is especially important for younger people and pregnant women.
- ◆ This year recommend flu vaccine for ANYONE 6 months and older.
- ◆ Immunity is likely to last all season.
- ◆ Expect enough vaccine for everyone who wants it.
- ◆ Most people will need just one dose of flu vaccine. [Give two doses to kids age 8 and under who are getting flu vaccine for the first time...or did NOT get any H1N1 vaccine last year.](#)
- ◆ Some insurance do not fully cover the cost of the nasal spray so you will want to check with your carrier.



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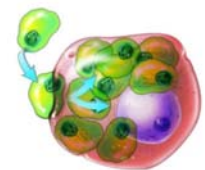
What is the Flu?

The flu (also called influenza) is a viral infection caused by the influenza virus. It affects the respiratory system and can cause mild to severe illness. Sometimes it can lead to death. Each winter, the virus spreads around the world. While it is possible to get the flu

even when it is not flu season, it is less likely.

There are two main kinds of influenza virus are Type A and Type B. The strains are usually different from one year to the next.

Virus Attacking Cell





Symptoms

If you have the flu, you might infect others one day before symptoms start and up to five days (sometimes more) after you become sick. This means you may be infecting others even before you know you are sick.

Symptoms usually start abruptly. They may include some or all of the following:

- High fever and chills
- Severe muscle aches
- Severe fatigue
- Headache
- Decreased appetite or other gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)
- Runny nose, nasal congestion
- Sneezing
- Watery eyes, conjunctivitis
- Sore throat
- Cough (can last for two or more weeks)
- Swollen lymph nodes in the neck

You may start to feel better in 7-10 days, but you may still have a cough and feel tired.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosis

The doctor will ask about your symptoms and medical history. Diagnosis of the flu is usually based on symptoms. In some cases, your doctor may take samples from your nose or throat to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

Antiviral Prescription Medicines

Most people with the flu do not need antiviral medicine. If you have the flu, check with your doctor to see if you need antiviral medicine. You may need it if you are in a high-risk group or if you have a severe illness (like breathing problems).

Antiviral medicines generally may help relieve symptoms and shorten the time you are sick. They must be taken within 48 hours of the first symptoms. Antiviral medicines include:

Zanamivir (Relenza)—This may worsen asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Oseltamivir (Tamiflu)—Some kinds of seasonal influenza virus are resistant to this drug.

Amantadine (Symmetrel)—Some kinds of seasonal influenza virus are resistant to this drug.

Rimantadine (Flumadine)—Some kinds of

seasonal influenza virus are resistant to this drug.

Oseltamivir (and perhaps Zanamivir) may increase the risk of self-injury and confusion shortly after taking, especially in children. Children should be closely monitored for signs of unusual behavior.

Rest and Fluids

It is important to get plenty of rest when your body is fighting the flu. Also, drink a lot of liquids including water, juice, and caffeine-free tea.

Over-the-Counter Pain (OTC) Relievers

These medications are used to control fever and to treat aches and pains. Adults can use Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen.

Over-the-Counter Pain (OTC) Cough Medicines

Over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines, including decongestants, expectorants, antihistamines, and cough suppressants, prescription cough medicines, and cough drops.

Herbal Treatment

Elderberry extract may reduce flu symptoms. Researchers found that products containing elderberry, like Sambucol and ViraBLOC, decreased symptoms in some studies. But be aware that herbal remedies are not regulated by the government. So the herbal supplements that you buy may not have the same ingredients as those studied and they may contain impurities (things that should not be in the product).

OTC cough and cold products should not be used to treat infants or children less than two years old. Rare but serious side effects have been reported. They include death, convulsions, rapid heart rates, and decreased levels of consciousness. Serious side effects have also been reported in children aged 2-11 years. Research is still going on for the safety of OTC products for this age group.



Prevention—Ways to Avoid Getting the Flu

The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get vaccinated. You will need to get vaccinated each year since the virus changes every season. Two forms of the vaccine are available: a flu shot (injection) and a nasal spray. You should get vaccinated between September and January (or later since the flu season can last much longer). The nasal spray is currently approved for healthy, non-pregnant people aged 2-49 years old. It takes about two weeks for the vaccination to protect you against the flu.

People who care for those with severely weakened immune systems should not get the nasal spray. Instead they should get the flu shot.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that anyone aged six months and older should get a flu vaccine.

Wash your hands often, especially when you come in contact

with someone who is sick. Wash your hands for 15-20 seconds with soap and water. Rubbing alcohol-based cleaners on your hands is also helpful.

Avoid close contact with people who have respiratory infections. The flu can spread starting one day before and ending seven days after symptoms appear. If you have to be in close contact with a sick person, wear a face mask or a disposable respirator.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away the tissue after you use it. Coughing or sneezing into your elbow or upper sleeve is also helpful.

Do not spit.

Do not share drinks or personal items.

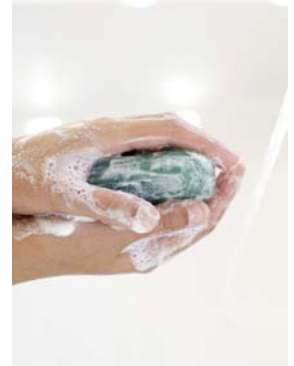
Do not bite your nails or put your hands near your eyes, mouth, or nose.

Keep surfaces clean by wiping them with a household disinfectant.

Sometimes it is beneficial to take antiviral medications to prevent the flu. You may want to talk with your doctor about taking antiviral medications to lower your risk of getting the flu if you are exposed to the flu and: you are at high risk for complications of the flu or you are a healthcare worker, public health worker, or first responder

If you have the flu and live with someone who is at risk for complications (e.g., elderly, babies, someone with cancer), that person may need to take antiviral medications to prevent getting the flu from you.

Remember that these medications are not a substitute for getting vaccinated. Vaccination is still the best way of preventing the flu.



The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get vaccinated.

Those who SHOULD NOT be vaccinated:

Influenza vaccine is not approved for use in children younger than 6 months so they should not be vaccinated, but their caregivers should be vaccinated instead. And people who are sick with fever should wait until their symptoms pass to get vaccinated. Some people should not be vaccinated before talking to their doctor. This includes:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed *Guillain-Barré syndrome* (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.



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(703) 834-1473
www.TownCenterFamilyMedicine.com

Vienna Family Medicine

(703) 255-9100
www.ViennaFamilyMedicine.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American Lung Association
<http://www.lungusa.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

Flu.gov
<http://www.flu.gov/>

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Review History

This was last reviewed September 17, 2010 by MDs at Fairfax Family Practice. Please be aware that this information is provided to supplement the care provided by your physician. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IMMEDIATELY IF YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider prior to starting any new treatment or with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.