



CALHOUN COUNTY

## Public Health Department

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Fact Sheet

# Influenza (Flu)

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## What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Infection with the flu virus can result in mild to severe illness with life-threatening complications. The flu virus is generally active in the United States from October through May, peaking anywhere from late December through March.

## Who can get influenza?

Influenza affects all age groups. However, older people and those who have chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and/or asthma are more likely to become infected and have complications. Pregnant women and children under 5 years of age are also at increased risk of flu complications.

## How is influenza spread?

The influenza virus is spread from person to person by droplets from the nose, throat, and mouth through sneezing, coughing, and speaking. People may be contagious from 1 day before developing symptoms to up to 7 days after getting sick.

Influenza can be spread through droplets on the surfaces. The virus can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours.

You cannot become infected by receiving the influenza vaccine.

## What are the symptoms of influenza?

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after exposure. Common symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches

- Fatigue
- Vomiting (more common in children)
- Diarrhea (more common in children)

### **Is there a treatment for influenza?**

Stay at home, rest, and drink lots of fluids. Over-the-counter pain relievers can help reduce the discomfort. However, children and teens with influenza should **NOT** be given aspirin or aspirin products because of the risk of developing Reye's Syndrome.

If symptoms continue to get worse, seek medical care.

If you are at special risk from complications of flu, you should consult your physician when symptoms begin.

Anti-viral drugs are available with a physician's prescription that may reduce the symptoms and severity of the disease if started early in the course of the illness – usually within 48 hours of the beginning of the symptoms.

### **Are there complications from influenza?**

Complications may include pneumonia (older people are at higher risk), dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. Children may get sinus or ear infections. In extreme cases, infection with the flu can cause death.

### **How can influenza be prevented?**

- Get vaccinated.
  - The flu shot is available in different types. Vaccines are approved for people 6 months and older.
  - The nasal spray flu vaccine is available for non-pregnant people aged 2-49 years old.
  - The best time to receive the vaccine is October through November, though you can still benefit from the vaccine after November.
- Reduce contact with infected persons whenever possible.
- Cough or sneeze into tissues and throw away immediately.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently using soap and warm water or a hand sanitizer.
- Use good hygiene and wash hands before eating and after using the bathroom.
- Frequently clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects
- Get pneumococcal vaccine if you are over 65 or a member of a high-risk group.

This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

## **What should I do if I have symptoms of Influenza?**

Stay home and away from others (including people you live with who are not sick).

## **How do I know when I can return to normal activities after having Influenza?**

You can go back to your normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, both are true:

- Your symptoms are getting better overall **and**
- You have not had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medication)

Once people resume normal activities, they are encouraged to take precaution for the next 5 days to curb disease spread, such as:

- Taking more steps for cleaner air
- Enhancing hygiene practices
- Wearing a well-fitting mask
- Keeping distance from others
- Getting testing to inform your actions to prevent spread to others.

*CDC offers separate, specific guidance for healthcare settings ([COVID-19, flu](#), and [general infection prevention and control](#)).*

## **Who should get an influenza vaccine?**

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year. While everyone should get a flu vaccine, it is especially important that certain people get vaccinated due to being at high risk of infection or complications.

These people include:

- Children younger than 5 years, and especially children under 2 years
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with medical conditions such as asthma, chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, weakened immune systems, and morbid obesity.
- Health care workers

## **Why do I have to get the flu vaccine every year?**

Flu viruses change from year to year, so the vaccination from previous years may not protect against the newer viruses. The influenza vaccine is updated to include current viruses each year. Additionally, the vaccine helps to reduce the burden of influenza illness on the health care system each year.

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## **How do I get more information on influenza?**

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 [www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/](https://www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>

Spanish: <https://espanol.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>

*Influenza*

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