

Important Flu Facts

DEFINITION:

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to severe complications. Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

PREVENTION:

One of the best ways to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. Other ways include:

- **Avoid close contact:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick:** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.
- **Cover your mouth and nose:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands:** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth:** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits:** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

COLD VS FLU:

Unlike a cold, flu symptoms usually come on suddenly. Another key difference is a fever, which might not happen with a cold. You might also have:

- Severe aches in muscles and joints
- Pain and tiredness around your eyes
- Weakness or extreme fatigue
- Warm, flushed skin and red, watery eyes
- A headache
- A dry cough
- A sore throat and runny nose

Important Flu Facts

Always check with your doctor for treatment recommendations. People sick with flu should make sure to drink plenty of fluids, get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods, wash their hands often and stay home to avoid spreading the flu to other people. Over the counter pain relievers may help people with the flu feel more comfortable. Children and teens with the flu should never take aspirin, because a rare but serious disease called Reye syndrome can occur. Do not give cough or cold medicines to children younger than 4 years of age. Students should stay home from school for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. The fever should be done without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher

EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS:

Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

Infants: In addition to above, get medical help right away for **an infant** who has these signs:

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

Adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough