

Influenza (Flu)

Sometimes people mistake symptoms of stomach flu, or gastroenteritis, for the viral infection we commonly call "flu." But they're not the same. Influenza, or flu, is a viral infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs that can make someone of any age ill. Flu can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death.

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are highly contagious and are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can be inhaled into the lungs. A person might also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own eyes, mouth or nose.

How long can a sick person spread flu to others?

People infected with flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to about 5-7 days after getting sick. This can be longer in some people, especially people with weakened immune systems.

Flu Symptoms vary by age, but can include:

- Fever / chills
- Sore throat
- Muscle or body aches
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Diarrhea and vomiting

Preventing seasonal flu: Get vaccinated

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season. It takes about two weeks after vaccination, for your body to develop antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection. Vaccines do not prevent influenza 100% of the time, however those who get vaccinated are less likely to have moderate to severe illness from influenza viruses. Flu vaccines will not protect against flu-like illness caused by non-influenza viruses. According to the Mayo Clinic, "The vaccine's effectiveness is usually strongest during the first six months after receiving the flu vaccine. After that, the strength of the protection it provides begins to diminish."

Every day actions

- Practice good health habits by getting regular exercise, getting enough sleep, drinking plenty of fluids paired with a healthy diet and managing stress.
- Avoid close contact with ill people, if ill, limit social contact
- Cover nose & mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Clean and disinfect surfaces/objects that may be contaminated

Why Trivalent vaccine instead of Quadrivalent vaccine this year?

The CDC has recommended all flu vaccines in the United States be trivalent this year. Global flu surveillance has not detected the "B/Yamagata" strain since March 2020. Therefore, the risk is very low in contracting this flu strain.

When will flu, activity begin?

The timing of flu is very unpredictable and can vary from season to season. Flu activity most commonly peaks in the U.S. in January, February however, it can occur as early as October and as late as May.

Does the flu vaccine cause the flu?

Contrary to popular belief, the flu vaccine does **NOT** cause the flu. Some people experience mild flu-like symptoms after vaccination, which can mean that your body is responding to the vaccine. If you do get the flu soon after vaccination, you may have been exposed to flu viruses either before getting vaccinated or within the two weeks it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated. Also, it is possible your symptoms are not caused by the flu. Other respiratory viruses, like the common cold, COVID, as well as some bacterial viruses, can cause symptoms similar to those caused by the flu.

Who should get vaccinated?

The CDC states, "All persons aged 6 months and older are recommended for annual vaccination, with rare exception".

Who should **NOT** get a flu shot?

Anyone with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine or an ingredient in the vaccine including allergies to eggs; If you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (also called GBS); People who are significantly ill with a fever should wait until symptoms subside before getting their flu shot; Children less than six months old. *For the most detailed and current list, go to the Center for Disease Control website or review the appropriate Vaccine Information Statement.*

2024-25 Influenza Vaccine

While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the upcoming season. The 2024-25 trivalent (3 strain) flu vaccine has the following vaccine strains. For Cell Based Vaccine: A/Wisconsin (H1N1); A/Massachusetts (H3N2); and *B/Austria (B/Victoria lineage); For Egg-based vaccine: A/Victoria (H1N1); A/Thailand (H3N2), and B/Austria (B/Victoria lineage).

Additional Information:

Further information is available at www.cdc.gov/flu