

INFLUENZA (Flu) FACT SHEET

What is influenza or the flu?

The flu is a highly contagious viral illness that infects the respiratory tract and is more severe than other similar illnesses such as the common cold. Because the flu changes every year, a new vaccine is created for each flu season. Getting an annual flu vaccination is vital to prevention. Flu season lasts from October through March with December through February as peak months.

What are the symptoms?

- Sudden onset of symptoms
- Fever (in most cases)
- Aches
- Chills
- Runny nose and cough
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea & vomiting are common in children

Symptoms appear usually 1 to 4 days after exposure and typically last 1-2 weeks

How can it be prevented?

- Get vaccinated every year! Vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu
- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or a sleeve
- Avoid those who are sick

More information: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

How can it be spread?

- HIGHLY contagious between people
- Spread through droplets released when those who are sick, cough, sneeze or talk
- Those who are ill are contagious 1 day before symptoms appear and 5-7 days after they disappear

How is it treated?

- Prescription antiviral medications can lessen symptoms and shorten the illness by 1 to 2 days
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
- **Do not return to work, school or daycare until cleared by a health care provider**
- The flu may cause complications such as bacterial pneumonia, severe dehydration or worsening of existing chronic conditions (heart disease, asthma). Contact your healthcare provider with any concerns.

