

# Influenza

## Influenza

Influenza is a respiratory (nose, throat, lungs) illness caused by influenza viruses (germs). Commonly known as the “flu,” influenza can cause mild to severe illness.

## Symptoms

You may have some or all of the following symptoms:

- fever or feeling feverish
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue (feeling tired)
- diarrhea and vomiting (more common for children than adults).

If you have these symptoms, you should:

- Stay at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (without using fever-reducing medicine).

Even if you don't have a fever, you may still have the flu and can spread it to others if you have other flu symptoms.

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink liquids, including water.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often, especially if you are in contact with others.
- Watch for changes in your symptoms to make sure they do not get worse.
- Treat the symptoms (talk to your pharmacist or health care provider for suggestions).
- Take flu antiviral medicine if your health care provider prescribes them. These medicines fight viruses, like the flu. They can help make your symptoms milder and shorten the time you are sick.

## When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you or your child has any of the following:

- trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- lips that are purple or blue
- pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- sudden dizziness
- confusion
- seizures
- severe or repeated vomiting (throwing up)
- flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- severe dehydration (not urinating or no tears when crying)

*(over)*

Additional symptoms specific to children:

- fast breathing
- bluish skin color
- not drinking enough liquids
- not waking up or not interacting
- being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- fever with a rash.

## How to Help Prevent the Spread of Influenza

- Get the flu shot each year.
- Stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue available, cough into your sleeve instead of your hand.

- Avoid close contact with anyone who is sick. If you get the flu, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use a waterless alcohol handrub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits.
  - Eat well-balanced meals.
  - Get regular exercise.
  - Manage your stress.
  - Drink plenty of liquids. (Don't share drinking cups or straws.)
  - Get plenty of rest.

**Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Health.**