

# Influenza (Flu)

What You Need to Know

## What is Influenza?

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

## How does it spread?



- Most often, influenza viruses spread by droplets made when people who are infected cough, sneeze, or talk.
- A person might get the flu by touching surfaces or an object that has influenza virus on it, and then touching their face.

## What are symptoms of Influenza?

Flu symptoms usually come on suddenly and can be mild to severe. You may feel some or all of these symptoms:



- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle/Body aches
- Vomiting/Diarrhea

## How long is a person contagious and able to spread Influenza?

People with the flu are the most contagious during the **first three days of their illness**. Young children and those with weakened immune systems may be contagious for longer periods of time.

Influenza viruses can be detected in most infected persons **beginning** one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days **after** becoming sick.

## How do I treat my symptoms?

If you have the flu, antiviral drugs can be used as treatment. Flu antiviral drugs can shorten the time you are sick and make symptoms milder. It is best to start treatment within 2 days of getting sick.

Antiviral drugs are **not the same** as antibiotics.



## Cold vs. Flu

Symptoms	Common Cold	Influenza
Onset	1-2 Days	Rapid
Fever	Rare	Usual
Aches	Slight	Usual
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly Common
Fatigue	Sometimes	Usual
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes
Cough	Mild to Moderate	Common
Headache	Rare	Common

## What can I do to prevent Influenza?

The best way to reduce your risk and protect yourself from severe illness is by getting a yearly **flu vaccine**. Everyone 6 months and older should receive a vaccine each season, especially those at higher risk.

### Other prevention methods:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home.
- Cover your cough and sneezes.
- Wash your hands often with running water and soap.
- Avoid touching your face, specifically eyes, mouth, and nose.



**For additional guidance and information, call 330-723-9688, option 2 to speak with a public health nurse.**