

Flu



Embracing Health

Influenza (commonly called the flu) is a viral infection that attacks the respiratory system, including your nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs. Influenza is not the same as the stomach virus that causes diarrhea and vomiting (although youngsters may have these symptoms when they have influenza). Every year more than 200,000 people in the U.S. end up in the hospital because of complications from the flu. On an average, about 36,000 Americans die from the flu each year, so it is a very serious health issue. The elderly, young children and people with certain health conditions like HIV are at the highest risk of serious complications from the flu.

Start a Dialogue

My 411! Ask yourself, am I or any member of my family at increased risk for complications from the flu?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. What medical conditions make the flu more dangerous?

Embracing Women

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a flu shot for all women who will be pregnant during flu season. Peak flu season in the U.S. is usually between November and March. Your immune system may be affected by pregnancy. This can put extra stress on your heart and lungs. As a result, you may be at increased risk of not only getting the flu but of developing serious complications, including pneumonia. Because the flu shot is made from killed (inactivated) influenza virus, it is considered safe during any stage of pregnancy. If you are

pregnant, you should **not** use the nasal-spray flu vaccine, because it is made with live, weakened influenza virus.

Consider Gender Differences

My 411! Ask yourself, could I be pregnant? If so, should I call my doctor to arrange for a flu vaccine?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. Is the flu shot safe for all pregnant women, or are there exceptions?

Embracing Lifestyles

The flu virus is spread mainly from person to person through either coughing or sneezing when someone is already infected. Some people get infected by touching an object that has flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose. Healthy adults may infect others beginning one day before their symptoms develop and up to five days after they get sick. This means you may be giving the flu to someone else before you even know you are sick. During the flu season, it's a good idea to wash your hands frequently and avoid crowds whenever possible.

Get a Handle

My 411! Ask yourself, since there seems to be a lot of flu going around this year, what can I do to avoid crowds?

Talk to Me! Talk to your doctor. Besides the flu shot, what do you advise people to do to avoid getting the flu?

Embracing Common Sense!

The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. There are two types of vaccinations. The flu shot is an inactivated vaccine containing killed virus that is given by needle. This shot is approved for use in people from age six months and older. The nasal spray flu vaccine, which is made with live, weakened flu viruses, is approved for use in healthy people from ages 5 to 49. Again, this vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. It takes about two weeks for the antibodies to develop that protect against influenza virus infection, so it's a good idea to get your vaccination early in the season!

Create Healthier Habits

My 411! Ask yourself, do I know where flu clinics are located and when they'll be providing the flu vaccine this year?

Talk to Me! Talk to your doctor. For my age and health condition, which form of vaccine should I get—the shot or the nasal spray?

Embracing Science

At first, the flu may seem like a common cold complete with a runny nose, sneezing, and sore throat. Colds generally develop slowly. The flu tends to come on suddenly. Common signs and symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever over 101 degrees F. Children with the flu tend to have higher fevers, often as high as 103 to 105 degrees F.
- Chills and sweats
- Headache
- Dry cough

Flu



- Muscle aches and pains, especially in your back, arms and legs
- Fatigue and weakness
- Nasal congestion
- Loss of appetite
- Children may have diarrhea and vomiting (this is rare in adults)

It's Time for Show and Tell

My 411! Ask yourself, am I familiar with the symptoms people seem to be having with the flu this year?

Talk to Me! Talk to your doctor. Is there anything I can be doing besides getting a vaccine that will help to protect me against the flu?

Possible tests

It is very hard to distinguish the flu from other infections based just on the symptoms. You may need a doctor's exam to determine whether you actually have the flu – or its complications. There are tests that can indicate if you have the flu, but they need to be done within the first two or three days of your illness.

Make Smart Choices

My 411! Ask yourself, I have been feeling like I may be coming down with the flu, should I call my doctor?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. If I've had a flu shot is it safe to take an antiviral medication as well?

Possible treatments

Your doctor may suggest using antiviral medications to help treat the flu. There are antiviral

drugs (amantadine, rimantadine, zanamavir, and oseltamivir) that have been approved to treat influenza. Antiviral treatments last for five days and must be given within two days of the onset of illness. If you have flu-like symptoms seek medical attention quickly. It's important to get plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids, and avoid using alcohol or tobacco. It's okay to use acetaminophen to help control fever and muscle aches. Remember that aspirin should never be given to children or teens with flu-like symptoms, especially when a fever is present

My 411! Ask yourself, is my medicine cabinet well stocked for this flu season?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. If I don't have acetaminophen on hand, what else is safe to use for flu symptoms?

Embracing Strength

You can help to prevent the spread of flu by remembering to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. When possible, use a tissue and then throw it away after use. Wash your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Using an alcohol-based hand cleaner will work if you don't have soap and water. Try to avoid close contact with anyone who is sick. If you get the flu make it a point to stay home from work, school, or other social gatherings. When possible, try to remember to avoid touching your mouth, eyes, or nose.

Simple Steps

My 411! Ask yourself, I think I have the flu, should I call in sick so I don't spread it to anyone else?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. I hate going to the doctor during flu season because there are so many sick people in the waiting room. What can I do to avoid this – and still stay healthy?