

Facts About: Seasonal Influenza

Also known as the flu



Communicable and
Vector-Borne Disease
Control Program
301-583-3750
TTY/STS Dial 711

www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health

About Seasonal Influenza

Seasonal influenza, or flu, is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. On average, 5-20% of persons in the United States get the flu each year. Of these, over 200,000 are usually hospitalized and 36,000 persons die from seasonal flu-related complications. There are two major types of influenza viruses: Type A generally causes the most severe symptoms, and Type B causes symptoms similar to Type A but less severe.

Symptoms of Seasonal Influenza

Seasonal influenza symptoms include: fever, headache, nasal congestion, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, and tiredness. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are more commonly seen in children.

How Seasonal Influenza Spreads

Seasonal influenza is spread by airborne droplets that are created when a person coughs or sneezes. Close contact (within 3 feet) is required for spread of the virus to occur. The virus can also be found on contaminated surfaces and spread to persons who touch these surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Persons can be contagious for one day before developing symptoms and up to 5 days after getting sick. Children may be contagious longer.

How You Can Reduce Your Risk of Seasonal Influenza

- **The best way to prevent the seasonal flu is by getting vaccinated yearly.** The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against H1N1 flu, for which there is a separate vaccine. There is a new vaccine every year because the flu viruses change from year to year. The shot you received last year won't protect you this year. The best time to get vaccinated is between October and mid-November. However, the flu vaccine can be given at any time during the influenza season.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. This will help prevent the flu and other communicable diseases.
- Keep fingers away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of the tissue properly.
- Stay away from those who are ill.



If You Do Get the Flu

If you do get the flu, talk to your health care provider to see if antiviral medications are recommended for you or other household members. You should also:

- get plenty of rest.
- drink plenty of liquids.
- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco.
- Check with your physician before taking over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and muscle aches. Never give aspirin to children or teenagers with flu-like symptoms, particularly fever.
- See your physician if your symptoms become severe or your fever lasts for more than 3 to 4 days.
- To avoid making others sick, stay home until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

For More Information/Links

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/>
U. S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.flu.gov>
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: <http://www.dhmm.maryland.gov/flumhd/>
Prince George's County Health Department: <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health>
Prince George's County Public Schools: <http://www1.pgcps.org/flu>
World Health Organization (WHO):
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs211/en/index.html>