

FLU FAQs

When is Flu season?

- While seasonal influenza (flu) viruses are detected year-round in the United States, flu viruses are most common during the fall and winter. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons varies, but influenza activity often begins to increase in October. Most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although significant activity can last as late as May.

How does Flu spread?

- People with flu can spread it to others up to about 6 feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

When are infected people considered contagious?

- People with flu are most contagious days 1-4 after their illness begins. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Those with weakened immune systems may pass the virus for longer than 7 days.

When do symptoms develop?

- Symptoms can begin about 2 days (but can range from 1 to 4 days) after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Some people can be infected with a flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those people may still spread the virus to others.

What are the preventive steps to avoid the flu?

1. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. This season, all flu vaccines will be designed to protect against the four flu viruses that research indicates will be most common.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
3. If you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. If you were prescribed “anti-viral medication” please take as directed.
4. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
5. Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
6. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.

7. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects often that may be contaminated with viruses that cause flu.

How do I know if I have the Flu or Covid-19?

- Flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a coronavirus first identified in 2019. Flu is caused by infection with a flu virus. Please visit this link for more information. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>

Information adapted from: CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

MADPH, <https://www.mass.gov/influenza>