

How the flu spreads

Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. 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.

This information was provided by the Department of Health and Human Services on their web site www.pandemicflu.gov

Prevention Tips

It is important to take the necessary precautions to avoid catching the flu and transmitting it to others. Incorporating the simplest steps into your everyday routine will help you stay healthy through the season. Medical professionals across the globe are researching the increasing probability of a pandemic flu in the near future; therefore it is crucial to pay close attention to your health this season. Here are some tips to follow:

Wash your hands

- Wash your hands thoroughly with warm water for at least 15 seconds (or the time it takes to sing Row, Row, Row Your Boat) especially after going to the bathroom and before eating.
- Rub hands together vigorously to cover all surfaces.
- Use a single use paper towel to dry hands and turn off faucet; then dispose of it properly.
- If soap and water aren't available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand rub.

Cover up when you cough or sneeze

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away after one use.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve, not your hands since germs spread more easily through hands.
- Place used tissues in the trash and then wash your hands.

When around sick people

- Wear a face mask when in close proximity to people who have the flu.
- Disinfect surfaces such as phones, keyboards, doorknobs, and faucets frequently.
- Avoid close contact with people who have the flu.

If you or your loved ones are sick

- If you get ill, stay home and avoid others as much as possible.
- Keep ill children home from school.
- Call your health care provider at the first sign of the flu. Anti-viral medications may help in speeding up the recovery process.
- Get a flu shot as an added protection against the virus.
- Keep a supply of medicines, including fever reducers and anti-diarrhea medicine, fluids with electrolytes, tissue, toilet paper and other supplies recommended so that when someone becomes ill you already have basic supplies and don't need to make a trip to the store for these items.
- U.S. Department of health and Human Services Checklist - link to <http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html>

Oftentimes, people confuse a cold with the flu. To help you detect whether you have a cold or the flu, remember these basic differences in symptoms:

::Symptoms::

::Cold::

::Flu::

Tiredness/Weakness
Fever

Very mild
Rare

Can last 2-3 days
Characteristic, high
at 101 degrees, lasts
3-4 days

Chest discomfort

Mild to moderate

Common

Stuffy nose

Common

Sometimes

Aches and pains

Slight

Usual and often
severe

Headache

Rare

Prominent

Sneezing

Usual

Sometimes

Extreme exhaustion

Never

Early and prominent

Sore throat

Common

Sometimes

Cough

Hacking, can become severe

Non-productive