

What is the Flu ?



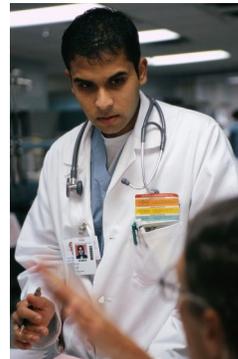
Influenza, commonly called “the flu”, is a highly contagious disease that is caused by a virus which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs). Influenza season is prevalent from November through April. It infects mainly children and adults under 35, however, it can occur at any age.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) monitors influenza and predicts viral strains anticipated each year. The influenza vaccine component is based on these predictions. Influenza viruses are always changing so annual vaccination is recommended. Consequently, people who have had the “flu” or who have been given a flu shot in previous years may become ill with a new strain.

What are the Symptoms?

For most people, symptoms last only a few days. They include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- chills
- fatigue
- Cough
- headache
- Muscle aches
- Runny nose
- Loss of appetite
- Occasionally, gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea



How is it Spread?

The influenza virus spreads from person-to-person through droplets from the nose and throat of infected persons. Unfortunately, people can spread influenza before they realize that they are ill. In general, adults are contagious from 1-2 days before symptoms start until about 7 days after the start of the illness. The incubation period for influenza is 1-4 days.

PEOPLE WITH INFLUENZA SHOULD:

- avoid any contact with others until 24 hours after fever is gone
- wash hands frequently
- do not share eating utensils

CONTACT WITH INFECTED PERSONS

If you have been in contact with someone with influenza and DO NOT have symptoms, you DO NOT need to be seen by a healthcare provider. Testing will not be helpful in these situations. The EXCEPTION is **anyone who is pregnant or has a chronic medical condition**. Contact your medical care provider.

Treatment

Influenza is caused by a virus. Since **viruses are not killed by antibiotics** (penicillin, etc.), such medications do not help to alleviate or shorten this illness. Treatment is aimed at **relieving the symptoms**. Most people who get influenza fully recover in 7-10 days with self-care and minimal, if any, medical intervention..

SELF-CARE

- Rest, drink plenty of fluids.
- Use Over-The-Counter (OTC) pain and fever reducers such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen for body aches and fevers.
- Stay home from classes or work until you have been free of fever (100°F. or 37.8° C.) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.
- Wear a mask if you leave your residence hall room to use a shared bathroom or to seek medical care.
- Do not overdress. Wear only enough clothing so you are not chilled.
- Increase fluid intake to at least 2-3 quarts in a 24-hour period.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco
- For coughing, use OTC medication with the cough suppressant *dextromethorphan*.
- Increase humidity in your living quarters through the use of a vaporizer or humidifier.

ANTI-VIRAL medications have limited use. They are NOT cures for influenza. They may slightly decrease the length and severity of the illness.

MULTI-SYMPTOM REMEDIES—Check the dosage of ingredients in any “multi-symptom” cold medicine you may decide to use. Some do not contain sufficient amounts of any one ingredient to provide optimum effectiveness.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Students should seek medical attention at Health Services or by their medical provider if:

- Flu-like symptoms improve then return with fever and worse cough
- Decrease in urination
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Significant change in fever (i.e. fever goes from 101°-103°F.)

Call 911* if you:

- **Have difficulty breathing**
- **Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen**
- **Sudden dizziness and confusion**
- **Severe or persistent vomiting**

* ON CAMPUS, BY CELL PHONE CALL 574-631-5555 IN AN EMERGENCY.

PREVENTION

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use alcohol-based hand cleaners when soap & water are not available.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
3. Get the **INFLUENZA VACCINE** each year.
4. Do not share utensils, drinks, cigarettes or personal care items.
5. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
6. Cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm or shoulder if tissues are not available. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

It is estimated that influenza causes more than 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths each year in the USA.

INFLUENZA VACCINES

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. The influenza vaccine is proven to be about 87% effective against certain flu strains.

FLU IMMUNIZATION needs to be given each year. About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body. This immunization will not protect you against illnesses that resemble the flu. There are two types of vaccines available:

INJECTABLE INFLUENZA VACCINE is an inactivated vaccine *containing killed virus*. This means people cannot get influenza from the vaccine. It is given with a needle, usually in the arm. This type of vaccine is given by UHS.



NASAL-SPRAY VACCINE The vaccine in the nasal-spray option is *made of live weakened viruses*. It is safe for **healthy** people 2 - 49 years of age who are not pregnant. This type of vaccine is *more expensive* than the flu shot, and is not available at UHS.



WHO SHOULD GET THE VACCINE ?

YOU ...

ALONG WITH ALL PEOPLE 6 MONTHS OF AGE AND OLDER.

GET THE VACCINE AS SOON AS IT IS AVAILABLE

Through your hometown health care provider **OR** during the flu clinics held on campus each fall.

Check the UHS website at <http://uhs.nd.edu> for dates & times of the flu clinics.

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UHS

UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES
SAINT LIAM HALL
574-631-7497
Available 24/7 during the Academic Year

INFLUENZA

(Flu)

*Influenza is not a stomach "bug"
It's not a bad cold —*



Influenza is a very contagious respiratory (lung) virus that attacks the whole body with aches, fever and other uncomfortable, unpleasant symptoms.

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NOTRE DAME IN 46556
<http://uhs.nd.edu>