

# Influenza

Seasonal “flu”, or influenza, is basically a respiratory disease caused by a virus. months. Flu viruses are quite contagious. They are spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. It takes from 1-3 days after exposure to show symptoms.

Depending on the type of virus and the individual, symptoms of the flu can range from mild to severe, the acute stage lasting from 3 to 5 days. Symptoms may include fever, chills, headaches, body aches, fatigue and a cough and/ or a feeling of burning in the chest. Occasionally, nausea and vomiting may be present with the respiratory symptoms, but this is rather uncommon. There will often be a congested nose with nasal discharge and a sore throat.

Symptoms usually subside within 10 days, but fatigue and/ or a cough may persist for another 7-10 days. It sometimes takes a month from the start of the flu symptoms before a person feels completely well.

Treatment includes bed rest (stay at home until your temperature has been below 100 degrees for a 24 hr period), fluids, steam inhalation, Tylenol or Advil (not aspirin) decongestants, saline gargles and lozenges for a sore throat. Antibiotics do not work against the flu virus, but ma), fluids, steam inhalation, Tylenol or Advil (not aspirin) decongestants, saline gargles and lozenges for a sore throat. Antibiotics do not work against the flu virus, but maybe necessary if complications arise.

Signs of complication may be fever lasting for more than 5 days, constantly colored secretions from the nose or throat,

earache, sinus pain, or shortness of breath. If you experience any of these symptoms, or any other symptoms that worry you, a visit to your doctor would be in order.

There are several things one can do to help prevent the flu.

1. Wash your hands with warm soap and water during the day.
2. Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when sneezing or coughing.
3. Avoid people who are ill. If you are ill, avoid other people. Stay home from school or work.
4. Avoid touching your eyes nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches his/hers eyes, nose or mouth.
5. **GET A FLU VACCINE!** Everyone over the age of six months may get a flu vaccine, in order to reduce his/her chance of getting the flu. Those who are at risk of having complications should especially consider an annual flu vaccine. October and November are the best times to get the flu vaccines

For more information regarding influenza, consult your health-care provider or visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).