



## Preparing for Flu Season

Influenza (or “the flu”) is a viral respiratory infection of the nose, throat, and lungs. Up to 20 percent of the population gets the flu every year.

The following steps will help protect you from the flu. They could also decrease your risk of hospitalization if you do contract it:

- 1. Know the symptoms.** Respiratory flu typically starts within one to four days of infection. Common symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. Individuals with chronic health conditions (such as asthma) may find that these symptoms worsen as well.
- 2. Be aware of contagion risks.** A person with the flu could be contagious up to a full day before onset of symptoms and for five to seven days after they appear. A person with the flu should stay home and isolate from others until their fever has been gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- 3. Get a flu shot.** An annual flu shot is your first line of defense against illness. It significantly decreases your risk of contracting the flu and will help to minimize its effects if you do catch it. You can obtain this year’s flu shot through your healthcare provider or at a local pharmacy.



- 4. Manage exposure.** The flu is primarily spread through human contact. To decrease the risk of infection:
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
  - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the tissue immediately.
  - Wash your hands with soap and hot water (or use hand sanitizer) often, and especially after contact with other people or items they have touched.
  - Clean surfaces regularly using a bleach-based solution.
  - If you share your living space with others, use separate towels. Avoid sharing food or utensils.
  - Sleep separately from others when sick (if possible).

Several strains of COVID-19 are also circulating right now. These tips may also be helpful in preventing exposure to COVID or spreading it to others.

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