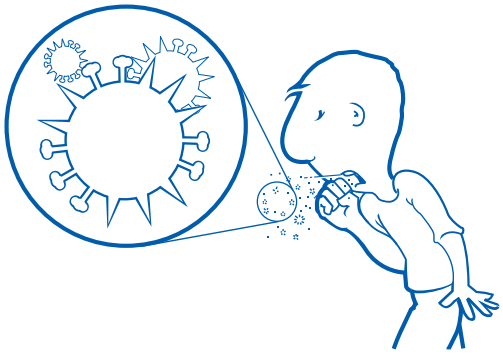
Influenza (Flu)

What is the flu?

The flu is an illness caused by flu viruses. The flu may make people cough and have a sore throat and fever. They may also have a runny or stuffy nose, feel tired, have body aches, or show other signs they are not well. The flu happens every year and is more common in the fall and winter in the U.S. People of all ages can get the flu, from babies and young adults, to the elderly.



Flu in People

Do people in the U.S. get the flu?

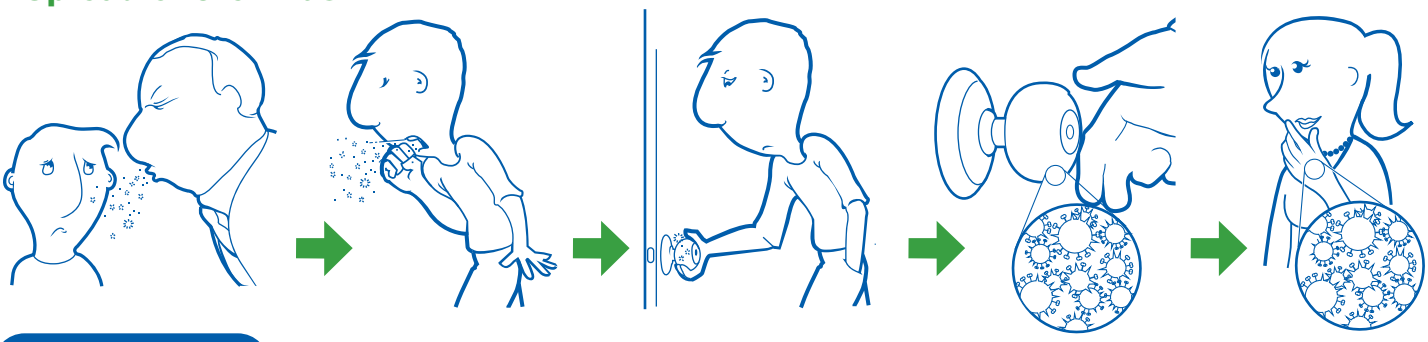
Yes. Flu viruses spread worldwide. Flu tends to occur mostly in the fall and winter months in the United States. Many people get the flu each year. The flu is also found in other parts of the world. But the time of year when flu is most common can vary from one area to another.

How does the flu spread?

People who have the flu can spread the virus by coughing or sneezing. Droplets released when a sick person coughs, sneezes, or talks can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs.

People may also catch the flu by touching their mouth or nose after touching something with the virus on it, such as doorknobs, tables, or an infected person's dirty hand.

Spread of the virus:



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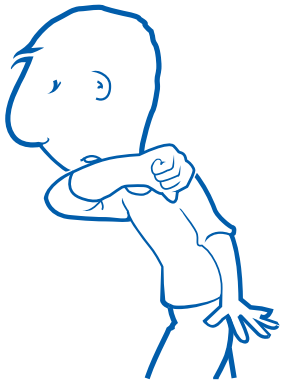
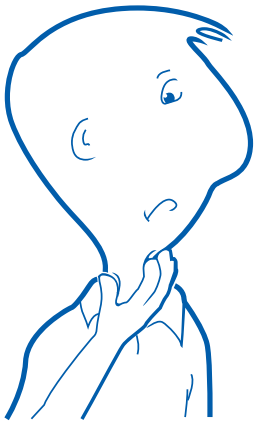
How do you know if you have the flu?

Signs of the flu can include:

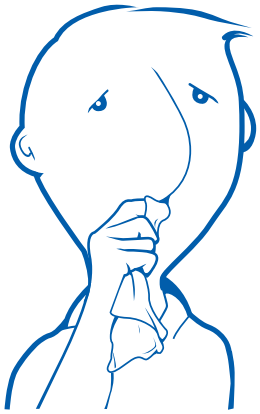
Fever



Cough



Sore throat



Runny or stuffy nose

Feeling weak or more tired than usual

Headache

Chills

Body aches

Two less common signs of the flu include:

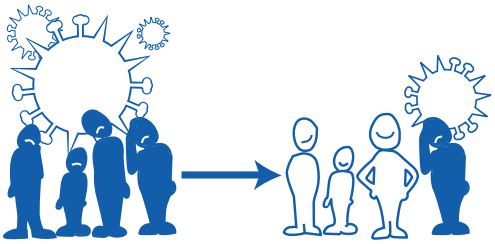
Vomiting

Diarrhea

Not everyone who is sick with flu will have all the signs of the flu at the same time. Some people with the flu don't have a fever. Most people who get the flu get better without seeing a doctor or taking medicine.

How sick do people get with the flu?

Some people get very sick and others do not. Most people who get sick get better without seeing a doctor or taking medicine. However, some people can get very sick from the flu and can die. Many of the people who get very sick are older than 65 years or have a medical condition such as: diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or kidney disease, or are pregnant. Children younger than 5 years of age are also at greater risk.



How long can a person with the flu spread the virus to other people?

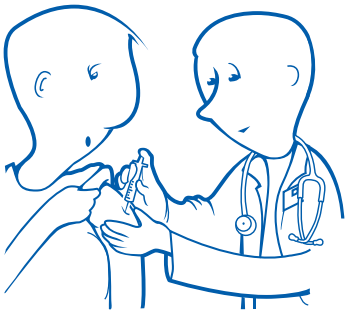
Most people may be able to spread the flu from 1 day before showing symptoms to 5 to 7 days after symptoms begin. Severely ill persons or young children may be able to spread the flu longer.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

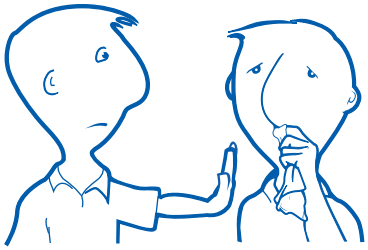
Prevention & Treatment

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

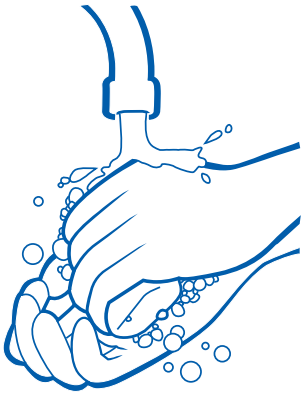
CDC recommends these steps to fight the flu:



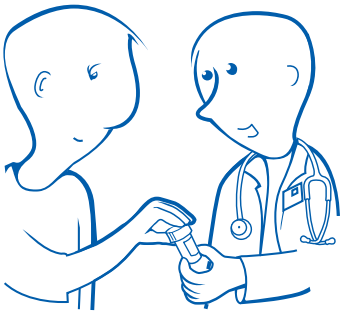
Vaccination



Stay away from people who are sick.



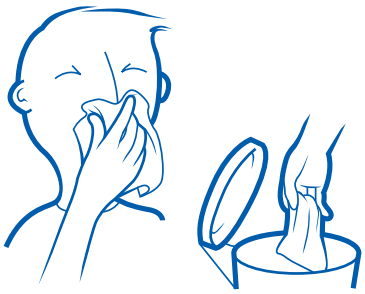
Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.



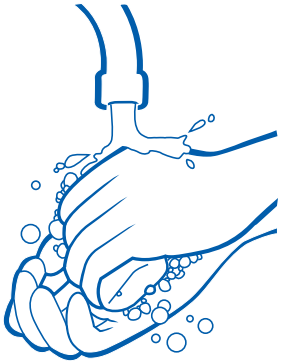
Use medication the way your doctor recommends it.

INFLUENZA (FLU) Flu and You

Everyday health habits to protect your health and the health of others:

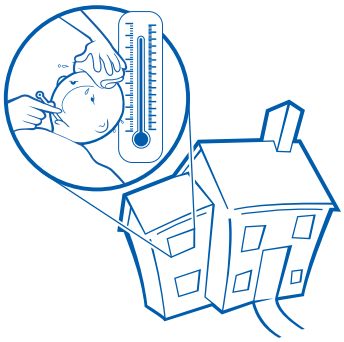


Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your arm when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.



Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth because germs spread this way.



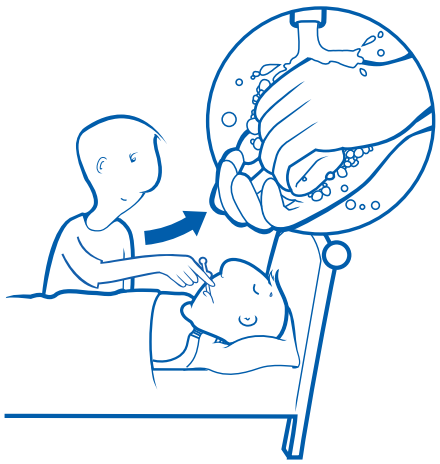
If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.*

**Your fever should be gone without using fever-reducing medicine. Staying at home means that you should not leave your house except to get medical care. Stay away from others as much as possible so you don't make them sick.*

During flu season, be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a few days. Keep some over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues, and anything else you need so that you do not have to go out while you are sick. If you are really sick or have other medical conditions or concerns, call your doctor. Your doctor will let you know if you need a flu test, flu treatment, or other care.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with the flu, should I go to work?

People who are not sick but have a sick family member at home with the flu can go to work as usual. Take simple steps such as washing your hands often with soap and warm water. If you cannot find soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Take these steps to prevent getting the flu from a sick family member.



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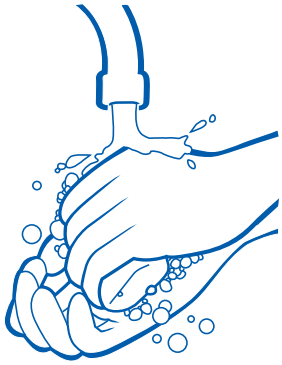
What is the best way to wash my hands to avoid germs?



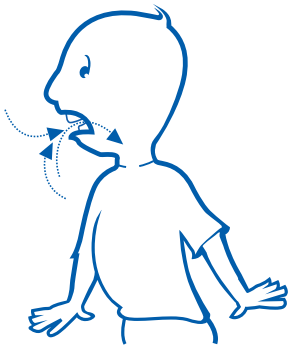
Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. When you wash your hands:

- Use soap and warm water.
- Wash for 15 to 20 seconds.

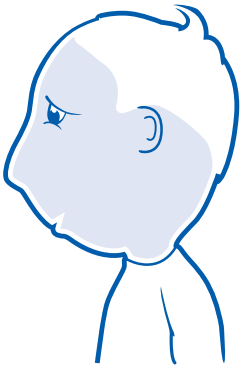
When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. If using a hand rub, rub your hands with the sanitizer until they are dry.

If you or someone you know gets sick and shows any of the following warning signs, get EMERGENCY medical care:

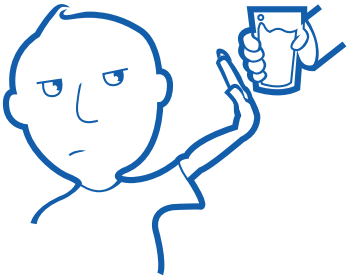
In children:



Fast breathing or trouble breathing



Bluish or gray skin color

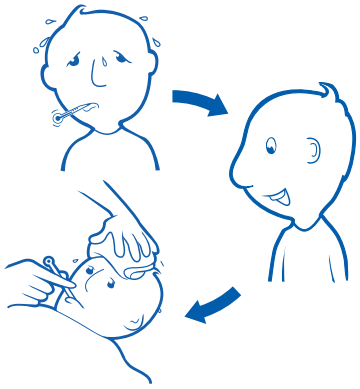


Not drinking enough fluids

Serious or constant vomiting

Not waking up or not interacting

Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held

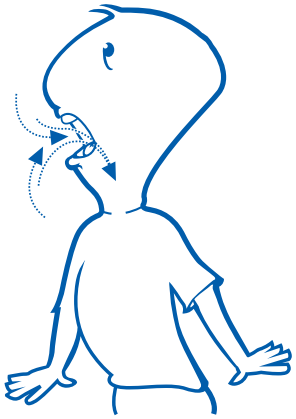


Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

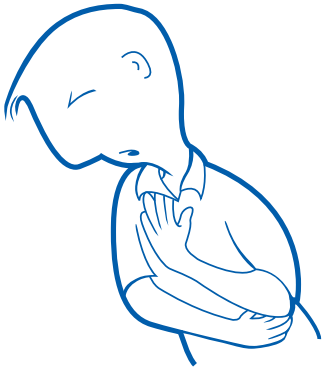
In infants:

You should also look for these warning signs: being unable to eat, having no tears when crying, and having far fewer wet diapers than normal.

In adults:

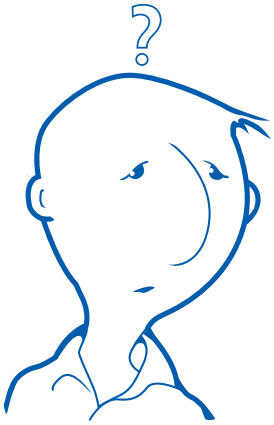


Hard time breathing or shortness of breath



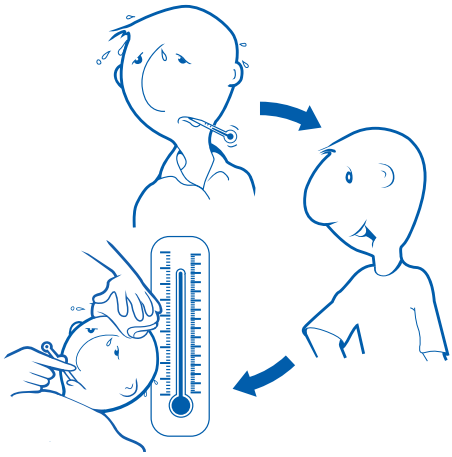
Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach

Sudden dizziness



Confusion

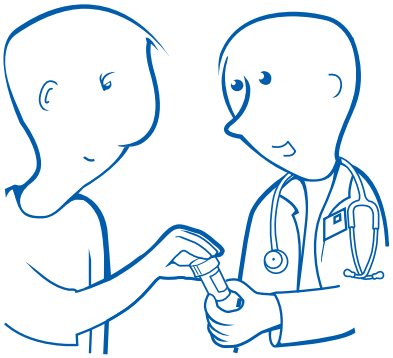
Serious or constant vomiting



Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Are there medicines to treat the flu?

Yes. Prescription medicines called antiviral drugs can treat the flu. If you are sick, these drugs can make you feel better faster and make the flu feel milder. Most people who get sick get better without the need for these medicines. But, if you need help getting well, your doctor may decide to give you antiviral drugs.



For more information call CDC info at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or go to www.cdc.gov/flu.

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