



# FLU FACTS

from the University of Maryland MEDICAL CENTER

The flu is a serious and contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and in some cases, can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is with frequent hand washing and by getting a flu vaccination each year. This is especially important for health care workers. We need to protect ourselves, our families and our patients.

## Every year in the United States, on average:

- Up to 20 percent of the population gets the flu
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu-related complications
- About 36,000 people die from the flu

Some people, such as older people, young children and those with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease) are at high risk for serious flu complications. Pregnant women are also among the top priority groups to be vaccinated against the flu.

H1N1 “swine” flu and the seasonal flu are spread the same way – mainly through the coughing and sneezing of people who have the flu. You can be infected by inhaling the virus or by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. Once infected, you may be able to infect others for a day before you get sick and up to seven days after symptoms develop.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also work well.
- Get vaccinated. We can stop influenza from spreading.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze. Throw away used tissues.
- Stay home if you’re sick with a flu-like illness and keep sick kids home too.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces in your home and work environment. Flu virus can survive up to eight hours on surfaces such as phones and keyboards.
- Follow public health advice to “keep your distance” from other people to lessen the spread of the flu.
- Develop a family emergency plan to deal with the flu. See [pandemicflu.gov/plan/index.html](http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/index.html)

## FLU SYMPTOMS

- **Fever**
- **Cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny or stuffy nose**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Tiredness and weakness**
- **Chills**
- **Body or muscle aches**

## TIPS FOR OUR PATIENTS AND VISITORS

1. **Do NOT visit patients if you have symptoms of the flu.**
2. **Take time to get the flu vaccine.**
3. **Wash hands frequently or use alcohol-based gel.**
4. **Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes.**
5. **If you come to the Emergency Department or a doctor’s office with flu symptoms, immediately put on a mask and use alcohol-based hand gel (provided at the entrance), and alert the receptionist to your symptoms so that you can sit away from other patients until you are called.**



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