

# Flu prevention



Influenza is a viral infection of the respiratory tract that causes symptoms like a cough, sore throat, and headache. Colds and flu have similar symptoms, but flu can be much more serious than a cold.

## How is flu spread?

When someone who has flu coughs or sneezes, droplets containing the influenza virus are released into the air and can infect people nearby. The influenza virus can also survive on objects like door handles and telephones for up to three hours, so if you touch something that an infected person has touched, you can become infected.

## The flu vaccine

A flu vaccination is composed of one or more strains of inactive influenza viruses that are introduced into the body via an injection. Inactive viruses cannot make you ill, but the body learns to recognise the virus and builds immunity to it. You might experience some soreness at the site of the injection, and some people experience muscle aches and fatigue as the immune system begins to work. The flu vaccination is made using egg, so you are likely to have an allergic reaction to the vaccination if you are allergic to egg.

You might still get the flu after having the vaccination because it might be a different strain to the ones you were vaccinated against, but flu shots are one of the best ways to prevent yourself from getting the flu.

Those at a high risk are children under 5 and adults over 65 (who may have compromised immune

systems), those with certain medical conditions, and those are at risk due to their lifestyle (smokers, people who drink excessively).

## Flu prevention

Basic hygiene practices will help to prevent and curb the spread of flu:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often.
- Try to avoid contact with sick people, and if you are ill, stay away from others.
- Keep your immune system healthy. Eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep.

Symptoms of flu can include:

- Sudden onset of a high fever and/or chills.
- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Severe muscle aches.
- Fatigue.

## What to do if you get sick

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should get bed rest, visit your doctor or pharmacist for medication, and drink plenty of fluids.