

The Flu

The flu is caused by a virus. Most people catch the flu through contact with others who are infected. A flu shot can help prevent the disease. Flu shots are extremely important for high-risk people. This includes:

- Women who are more than three months pregnant.
- Young children.
- People over the age of 65.

Know the symptoms

Flu symptoms usually come on fast. They appear one to seven days after you are in contact with the virus. The flu spreads easily. It often strikes a full community at one time. The first symptom of the flu is a fever between 102 and 106°F. Other common symptoms may include:

- Chills.
- Body aches.
- Dizziness.
- Flushed face.
- Headache.
- Nausea and vomiting.

The fever and aches may begin to go away after the second day. New symptoms may occur then. They usually will go away between four and seven days. These symptoms include:

- Dry cough.
- Breathing problems.
- Runny nose.
- Sneezing.
- Sore throat.

How to treat symptoms

No prescription drugs can cure the flu. Take pain relievers acetaminophen or ibuprofen to help lower the fever and relieve the aches. Cough drops can soothe a sore throat. Drinking plenty of fluids is also important. Hot drinks such as tea will reduce coughing and help open your airways.

Antivirus prescriptions may reduce the symptoms. Visit your doctor immediately when symptoms first appear. Many prescriptions work only during the first 48 hours.

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How the flu spreads:

The flu virus typically spreads by person-to-person contact. This contact may include coughing or sneezing. Or talking to someone infected with the virus. You can get the flu by touching something with the virus on it.

You can take many actions to reduce or stop the spread of germs and the flu virus. These actions include:

- Cover your nose with a tissue when you sneeze. Wash your hands immediately.
- Cough into your sleeve and not your hands. This will prevent germs from spreading on your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Between washings, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose.
- Avoid being near someone who has the flu.
- If you have the flu, try to stay home. Avoid being around people until your fever is gone.
- Clean surfaces such as doorknobs, computer keyboards, cell phones and any other area where germs can spread.
- If someone is sick in your family, use throwaway items such as paper plates, paper towels and paper cups.