



Each year in the U.S., the flu causes more than 226,000 hospitalizations and about 36,000 deaths.



### Common Seasonal Flu Symptoms:

- > Fever (Usually High)
- > Cough
- > Runny Or Stuffy Nose
- > Sore Throat
- > Feeling Tired Or Weak
- > Headache
- > Muscle Or Body Aches
- > Stomach Symptoms  
(Mostly In Children)

**!** A flu shot\* is the best way to protect yourself against seasonal influenza (flu).

\* Note: Flu vaccine is available as both a shot and a nasal spray.

To learn more about the flu, visit  
[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/flu](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu)

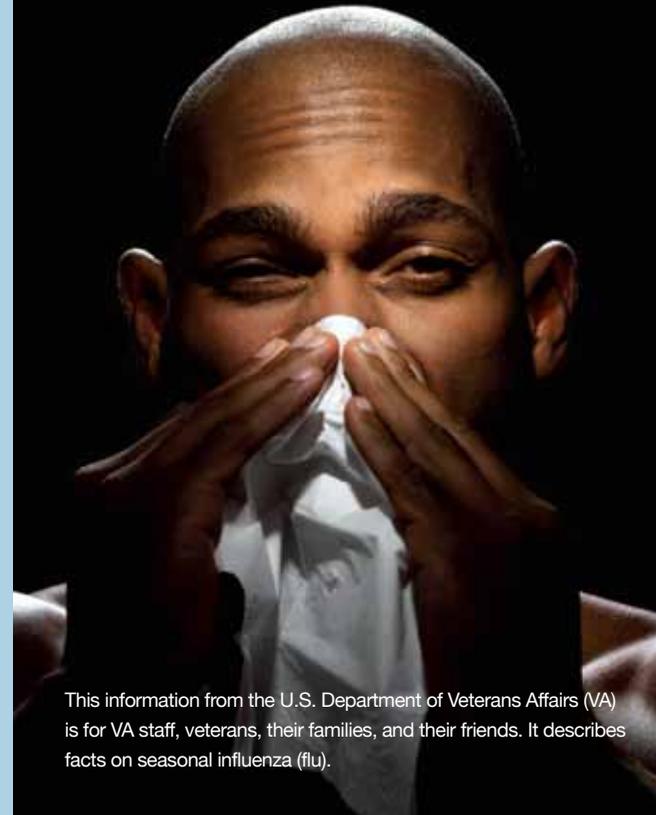


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Gen Audience 8 July 2009  
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# Seasonal Flu

*What You Need to Know*



### Seasonal flu is a respiratory illness that:

- > Is caused by flu viruses that can change each year
- > Spreads easily
- > Occurs each year during fall, winter, and spring

### How does the flu spread?

- > When a person with the flu sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, the flu virus can spread into the air as droplets from their mouth or nose. These droplets can spread to people and surfaces within 3 to 6 feet.
- > The flu virus can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the virus on it. If you then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth, you can get the flu.

This information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is for VA staff, veterans, their families, and their friends. It describes facts on seasonal influenza (flu).

### **!** Getting A Flu Shot Can:

- > **PROTECT** you, your family, and your friends from the flu
- > **PREVENT** severe illness and even death

## What happens when people get the flu virus?

- > Illness can start 1 to 4 days after exposure
- > Illness from flu can:
  - » Make other health problems worse
  - » Cause pneumonia
  - » Lead to death (mostly in those age 65 and older)
- > People may be able to spread the flu virus to others 1 day **before** they feel sick and up to 5 days **after** getting sick



## How is seasonal flu treated?

- > By getting rest
- > By drinking fluids
- > By using fever reducers like Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (e.g., Advil® or Motrin®)\*\*
- > By taking antiviral drugs as Needed (From your healthcare provider)

The flu virus can live on surfaces, such as countertops and door knobs, for 24-48 hours.

## How can I protect myself from seasonal flu?

- > Get vaccinated (flu shot or nasal spray) each year in fall or winter
- > Avoid people who are sick
- > Clean hands often
- > Keep hands away from face
- > Cover coughs and sneezes

## The best way to stop the flu is to GET A FLU SHOT EACH YEAR

### ✓ Who **should** get a flu shot?

Anyone who wants to reduce the risk for becoming ill with flu! Especially:

Adults aged 50 and older

Anyone who lives in community living centers with other people (e.g., nursing homes and domiciliaries)

Anyone with ongoing health problems

Children aged 6 months through 18 years

Women who will be pregnant during flu season

Healthcare workers and caregivers, including household contacts

### ✗ Who **should NOT** get a flu shot?

People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs

People who have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past

People who have had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot

Children aged less than 6 months

People who are sick with a fever (recover before getting a flu shot)

### ? Can a flu shot give me the flu?

**NO.** Some people get minor body aches, a headache, or a low-grade fever, but this is **NOT** the flu. If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Most people have none of these symptoms.

There is no live virus in the flu shot so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot.

Almost all people who get the flu shot have no serious problems from it.



\*\* Brand names included in this information are provided as examples only. Their inclusion does not mean that these products are endorsed by VA or any other Government agency. Also, if a particular brand name is not mentioned, this does not mean or imply that the product is unsatisfactory.

# Symptoms of Flu

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (more in children than adults)

## If the person has flu symptoms they should:

- Rest
- Drink fluids
- Stay home
- Take fever reducers such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil or Motrin)



# When to Seek Medical Care

## IF the person:

- Is unable to drink enough fluids (has dark urine; may feel dizzy when standing)
- Has the fever for more than 3 to 5 days
- Feels better, then gets a fever again

## CALL a healthcare provider

## Or IF the person:

- Is short of breath or is wheezing
- Coughs up blood
- Has pain in the chest when breathing
- Has heart disease (like angina or congestive heart failure) and has chest pain
- Is unable to walk or sit up, or function normally (others might be the ones to notice this—especially in elderly persons)

## GO RIGHT AWAY for medical care



### Infection: Don't Pass It On Team

U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Central Office (13)  
810 Vermont Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 273-8567  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/pandemicflu.htm](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/pandemicflu.htm)  
[vaww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/Flu/pandemicflu.htm](http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/Flu/pandemicflu.htm)  
(VA staff only)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)



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# How to Help Control the Spread of Flu



*This information is provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans, their families, friends, volunteers, and employees. It describes ways to help control the spread of influenza (flu) within our homes and keep ourselves and those around us as healthy as possible.*

# How to Help Control the Spread of Flu



**DON'T ENTER THE HOME** of a sick person (especially when she/he has a fever) if you are not needed for the person's care or support.

**AVOID GETTING TOO CLOSE** to a sick person if you must be in or enter the home of a sick person. Keep at least three feet away from the sick person.

**SEPARATE A SICK PERSON** from other people in the home.

**HAVE ONLY ONE PERSON PROVIDE CARE FOR A SICK PERSON**

**KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF FLU** and be aware of these in other people in your home, work place and community.



**GET FLU VACCINE** (a shot or nasal spray as recommended by your healthcare provider).

**KEEP HANDS CLEAN** by washing with soap and water and by using alcohol based hand rubs. Sick people should clean their hands too!

**COVER COUGHS AND SNEEZES** by using clean tissues. Coughing or sneezing into your sleeve is OK when you don't have a tissue or handkerchief. A sick person should cover their coughs and sneezes too!

**DISPOSE OF USED TISSUES** immediately into a trash or waste can. Always clean hand after using a tissue.

**KEEP SURFACES CLEAN** by using household cleaners. Make sure to clean shared surfaces often such as faucets, light switches, and handles on doors and cabinets.

**HAVE THE SICK PERSON STAY HOME** and avoid leaving unless seeking medical care. A sick person is most likely to spread flu when she or he has a fever or during the first 5 days of getting sick.

**KNOW WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE** for a person who is sick.

**WASH ALL EATING UTENSILS AND DRINKING GLASSES WELL.** No need to separate a sick person's utensils or drinking glasses or do any special washing or sterilizing.

**CHANGE BEDDING AND TOWELS.** Clean hands after touching soiled laundry. No need to clean a sick person's laundry separately.

**AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE, AND MOUTH.** Germs often spread this way.

**WEAR A MASK** over your nose and mouth if you are giving care to a sick person.



## Where Can I Learn More?

Your healthcare provider

Your local VA

Local and national news

On these Web sites

[www.publichealth.va.gov/Flu/pandemicflu.htm](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/Flu/pandemicflu.htm)

[vawww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/Flu/pandemicflu.htm](http://vawww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/Flu/pandemicflu.htm)  
(VA staff only)

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

**CLEAN HANDS BEFORE  
AND AFTER CARING  
FOR A SICK PERSON**



*After being sick with pandemic influenza,*

## When to Return to your Workplace or to School



This information is provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans, their families, friends, volunteers, employees and trainees. Use it as a guide if you have been told you have pandemic flu by a health care provider. Use it if you believe you have pandemic flu based on symptoms of illness. This guide can help you to decide when to return to the workplace or to school. Use this only during a flu pandemic.

This guidance can help you to decide when to return to the workplace or to school. It applies only when:

- ← A flu pandemic is taking place
- ← If your local health department or community guidance does not state otherwise

Use it as a guide if you:

- ← Have been told you have pandemic flu by a health care provider
- ← Believe you have pandemic flu based on symptoms of illness

### WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

- ← Your healthcare provider
  - ← Your local VA
  - ← Local and national news
  - ← On these Web sites
- [www.publichealth.va.gov/Flu/pandemicflu.htm](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/Flu/pandemicflu.htm)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)



**Infection: Don't Pass It On** Team

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## After returning to your workplace or school, remember:

← You may be coughing for weeks but not be contagious. It is always good to cover your coughs or sneezes with tissues, and throw them in the trash. Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing as soon as you can.

← Keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water or by using alcohol-based hand gels. When you can, avoid touching people and surfaces with unwashed hands.

← Return home or stay home and contact your health care provider if:

- Fever re-occurs
- Cough worsens
- Breathing is not normal
- You have other symptoms that worry you



# If you have pandemic flu, before returning to your workplace or school:

## HOW FLU IS SPREAD

Pandemic flu is an illness that is easy to spread to others at home, in the community, at work, or at school. The pandemic flu viruses are spread from person to person when people with flu cough or sneeze. People may get flu by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose. Once you have had pandemic flu, you are not likely get sick from that same virus.

## SYMPTOMS OF FLU

- Sudden onset of fever (100.4°F [38°C] or higher)
- Sudden onset of cough, sore throat, and/or problems breathing

These often occur with chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and runny or stuffy nose.

Pandemic flu illness will likely make many people, even young adults feel very sick - sick enough to stay in bed. Contact your health care provider if you:

- Are not sure if you have pandemic flu
- Want information about medicines that may help you get better faster
- Want to know how to avoid spreading the flu virus to others



Employers may offer special sick leave options in a pandemic. Let your work know if you are:

- Sick with pandemic flu
- Home caring for someone who is sick

## STAY HOME AND AWAY FROM OTHERS, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE UNTIL

- ← At least 7 days after your symptoms first appeared AND
- ← At least 48 hours after your fever has ended without your taking fever-reducing medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol™), and ibuprofen (Motrin™, Advil™).



**WHY?** Studies show you are most contagious and likely to spread flu virus to others for at least 7 days after your first symptoms appeared and for up to 48 hours after your fever has ended.

## IF YOU ARE IMMUNOSUPPRESSED, CONSULT WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ABOUT WHEN :

- ← You may return to your workplace or school
- ← If you should receive antiviral medicines

**WHY?** Being immunosuppressed means your body's immune system may be weaker than normal. For example, these can weaken your body's immune system:

- Cancer or cancer treatment
- Organ or bone marrow transplants
- HIV/AIDS
- Taking drugs such as steroids

Studies show that an immunosuppressed person who has flu may be able to spread flu virus for a longer time than a person who is not immunosuppressed.

**IF YOU ARE TAKING ANTIVIRAL DRUGS FOR FLU,** talk with your health care provider as to when to return to your workplace or school.

**WHY?** Oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®) are antivirals used to treat flu. They may shorten the time when you are contagious (able to spread flu to others). This may allow you to return to work or to school sooner. Without antivirals, most should stay away from others, work or school for 7 days after first symptoms appear.

Note:

Even if you are taking antivirals, you should not return to work or to school for at least 48 hours after your last fever.