

Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency
Lancaster County Health Advisory Council
Important Information: *Seasonal Influenza*
12/07/2023

What it is...

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

What it does...

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes. You may be able to spread flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as when you are sick with symptoms. People with flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after their illness begins. Some otherwise healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

What to expect...

Influenza (flu) can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu symptoms usually come on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever

What to do...

Most people with flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care. If you have symptoms of flu and are in a higher-risk group, or are very sick or worried about your illness, contact your health care provider (doctor, physician assistant, etc.). Flu can have serious health consequences. Get your family vaccinated. It is the first and most important thing you can do to protect against flu. CDC recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone six months and older.

Resources:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) Influenza
[Influenza \(Flu\) | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/)

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (3.5 version) [Influenza
<https://chat.openai.com/>