



Flu Facts for Parents

Influenza is a viral infection that attacks the respiratory system — your nose, throat and lungs. In most cases influenza resolves on its own. But sometimes, influenza and its complications can be deadly. Though the annual influenza vaccine isn't 100 percent effective, it's still your best defense against the flu.

Initially, the flu may seem like a common cold with a runny nose, sneezing and sore throat. But colds usually develop slowly, whereas flu symptoms come on suddenly. Although a cold can be a nuisance, you usually feel much worse with the flu.

Common signs and symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever over 100.4 F (38 C)
- Muscle or body aches
- Chills and sweats
- Headache
- Persistent cough
- Fatigue and weakness
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets. These droplets are spread when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Less often, it is spread by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes. Other respiratory viruses are spread this way too.

People infected with flu may be able to infect others 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick.

How to prevent spreading the flu:

- Stay home if you are sick, and don't send students to school if they are experiencing signs and symptoms of illness.
- Practice following everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs:
 - Cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Wash hands often, especially before eating, and after coughing into hands or tissue.
 - Use hand sanitizer when you are unable to wash hands.
 - Prevent exposure by keeping your hands away from your nose, mouth, and eyes.
 - If you or someone in your family is sick, do not return to work or school until the person has been fever free for 24 hours.