

# Seasonal Influenza Public Information Sheet

## What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a respiratory illness caused by flu viruses that can spread easily from person to person. Influenza can cause mild to severe illness. Symptoms usually are fever and cough or sore throat, and may also include headache, extreme tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, or muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea can also occur, especially in children.

## What should I do to prevent the flu?

Get vaccinated! Everybody age 6 months and older should get influenza vaccine every year.

## What should I know about the flu vaccine this year?

There are two types of flu vaccine:

- Inactivated ('flu shot'): This flu vaccine can be given by injection to anyone aged 6 months or older.
- Live attenuated ('nasal spray'): This flu vaccine can be given as a nose spray to any healthy non-pregnant person aged 2 to 49 years.

Both types of influenza vaccine protect against 3 strains of flu:

- One H3N2 virus,
- One H1N1 virus (the same strain that caused so much illness last year), and
- An influenza B virus.

Most people need only one dose for protection. Some children aged 6 months through 8 years will need two doses four weeks apart for full protection this year. Talk to your child's healthcare provider.

## Is there anyone who should NOT get inactivated vaccine ('flu shot')?

- Persons less than 6 months of age.
- Persons with a serious allergy to eggs or other vaccine component.
- Persons with moderate or severe illness should wait until illness resolves before getting the vaccine.
- Persons with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome within 6 weeks following a previous dose of influenza vaccine should talk to a doctor before receiving the vaccine.

## Is there anyone who should NOT get live attenuated vaccine ('nasal spray')?

- People less than 2 years or more than 50 years of age
- People with a medical condition that places them at high risk for complications from influenza, including those with chronic heart or lung disease, such as asthma or reactive airways disease; people with medical conditions such as diabetes or kidney failure; or people with illnesses that weaken the immune system, or who take medications that can weaken the immune system.
- Children <5 years old with a history of recurrent wheezing
- Children or adolescents receiving aspirin
- People with a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome that occurred after receiving influenza vaccine
- Pregnant women
- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs or who are allergic to any of the nasal spray vaccine components.

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## Does everyone who is sick with the flu need to see a health care provider?

Most children and adults who are sick with the flu and are generally in good health will recover without needing to visit a health care provider. Some people may want to call their health care provider for advice about how to care for the flu at home. You can also get home care information from

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/parents>

## Who should call or visit a health care provider if they get flu symptoms?

- Children and adults who are at higher risk for severe illness or complications (see list below)
- Children and adults with more severe flu symptoms should contact a health care provider.

Whenever possible, **call** your health care provider to get advice before making an appointment or visiting. Please do not go to an emergency department unless you have severe symptoms or you are at increased risk of complications and cannot access a doctor's office or clinic.

## I think I have the flu. What should I do?

- If you are sick with the flu, you may be ill for a few days to a week. Please stay home so you can get better and prevent others from getting ill. Drink plenty of fluids and rest as much as possible. Avoid travel. Do not go to work, school or other public places until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (without use of fever-reducing medications).
- Only go out if you need medical care or other important supplies. If you leave the house to seek medical care, please wear a facemask when you get to the healthcare facility.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap or use a hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- In general, avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially those with one of the high-risk chronic conditions listed on the next page.

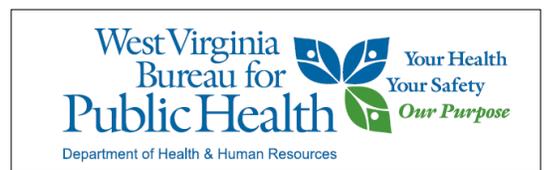
## I think I have the flu. Should I get tested and treated for flu?

Testing and treatment is not needed or recommended for most children and adults who get influenza. Antiviral treatment (a prescription medicine) is recommended primarily for people with the flu who have severe illness or who are at higher risk for complications.

## Who is at increased risk for more severe illness or complications from flu?

- Children younger than 5 years old – particularly children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with the following medical conditions:
  - chronic diseases of the lungs, heart, kidney, liver, blood, brain or nervous system, muscles (particularly those that cause difficulty with swallowing). Diabetes is also a risk factor;
  - a weakened immune system, including caused by medications or by HIV; or
  - people 18 years old or younger who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

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## When should I see a medical provider right away?

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, go to an emergency room or urgent care center.

For **children**, emergency warning signs include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color (call 911 immediately)
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

For **adults**, emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

## For more information:

- State of West Virginia influenza website at <http://www.wvdep.org/AZIndexofInfectiousDiseases/Influenza/tabid/1518/Default.aspx>
- State of West Virginia Pandemic Flu website at [www.wvflu.org/](http://www.wvflu.org/)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) influenza information: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>