



Influenza Facts

What is influenza?

Influenza, also known as “the flu”, is caused by a virus that affects the nose, throat, bronchial airways, and lungs. There are two types of flu that affect humans, types A and B. Influenza circulates in the United States each year between the fall and winter months, which is why it is called “seasonal flu”.

Although there are only two types of flu virus there are multiple strains for each type that change from year to year.

What are the symptoms of flu?

Flu can range from a very mild to serious, sometimes fatal illness. Symptoms may include fever of 100°F to 103°F (possibly higher in children), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and extreme tiredness.

How is flu spread?

Flu is spread from person to person by respiratory droplets released during talking, coughing, sneezing, laughing, or singing. Touching an object that is contaminated with flu virus and then touching one’s own eyes, nose, or mouth can also spread flu. People are usually contagious from the day before their symptoms begin, and then continuing for up to one week.

What is the time period between exposure and symptom onset?

The time period between exposure and symptom onset is 1 to 5 days.

How long do flu symptoms last?

Most people who have flu recover completely in 1 to 2 weeks, but sometimes the illness is serious with potentially life-threatening complications such as pneumonia.

What is the treatment for flu?

Most people who get the flu are adequately treated with fluids and rest. Antiviral medications are available to prevent or reduce the severity of flu and are most effective if started within 2 days of symptom onset. Antibiotics do not work against the flu virus and therefore will not help a person recover from the flu.

Who should get vaccinated this year in Oklahoma?

All persons aged 6 months and older are recommended to receive the flu vaccine.

People in the following categories are strongly encouraged to receive the flu vaccine due to their risk for flu related complications or have exposure to others at risk for flu related complications.

- People 50 years and older
- Those with chronic diseases or immunocompromised
- Children less than 5 years or children with neurological disease
- Pregnant women
- Persons in nursing homes or long-term care facilities

- Household members and caregivers of children or elderly
- Healthcare workers

What can be done to control or prevent flu?

We join the CDC's "Take 3" campaign to fight the flu. These three actions are:

1. Take time to get a flu vaccine as discussed above.
2. Use everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.

These include:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing
 - Disposing of tissues immediately into trash containers
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing, sneezing or using a tissue
 - Using alcohol-based hand sanitizers if your hands are not visibly soiled
 - If you are without a tissue, cough into your sleeve, not your hands
 - Staying home if you are sick with a fever and a cough. Remain home until 24 hours after your fever goes away, without the use of fever-reducing medications. Do not go to work, school, church, or any group events during this time. Do not visit nursing homes, hospitals, or other healthcare settings. If you need to seek healthcare, call ahead or report your symptoms immediately when you arrive. You may be asked to wear a mask while you wait to be seen.
3. Take antiviral flu medications if prescribed by your healthcare provider.

For further information, contact the Oklahoma City-County
Health Department,
Epidemiology Services (405) 425-4437
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