

Avoiding the Flu

Flu season is here! The influenza (flu) virus typically becomes active in early fall and continues to spread until late spring. This viral respiratory infection comes on suddenly and may linger for several days. Here are some things to remember when flu season heats up:

- ▶ Respiratory flu starts within one to four days of infection. Common symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, body ache, and fatigue. Some people experience vomiting or diarrhea as well. People with chronic health conditions (such as asthma or heart disease) may find that their symptoms worsen when they have the flu.
- ▶ A person with the flu can be contagious for up to a full day before she or he shows symptoms and for five to seven days after they appear. People with the flu should stay home until their fever has been gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- ▶ The flu is primarily spread by human contact. To minimize your risk of infection:
 - Wash your hands with soap and hot water often, but particularly when you are cooking, eating, touching another person, or handling objects others have touched. When hand washing is not an option, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, especially if you haven't been able to wash your hands recently.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the tissue afterwards.
- Frequently disinfect tables, counters, doorknobs, sinks, and other surfaces with a bleach-based solution.
- If you are sick, limit your contact with others. Sleep separately from a healthy spouse or partner, use different towels, and avoid sharing eating utensils.
- ▶ A flu shot will help you avoid infection, and may minimize the effects of the virus if you do contract it. Flu vaccines are typically available in early fall and are recommended for everyone six months of age and older.

Source: cdc.gov

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