



Influenza (Flu) FAQ

Disease Basics

Q: What is Flu?

A: Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

Q: What is an influenza virus?

A: There are two main types of influenza (flu) virus: Types A and B. Both types can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu infection can result in hospitalization or death.

Q: When is flu season?

A: While seasonal influenza (flu) viruses are detected year-round in the United States, flu viruses are most common during the fall and winter. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons can vary, but influenza activity often begins to increase in October. Most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although activity can last as late as May.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: 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.

Symptoms

Q: What are the symptoms and complications that the flu can cause?

A: Flu signs and symptoms usually come on suddenly. People who are sick with 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.*

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

Q: Should I be tested for the flu?

A: It is very difficult to distinguish flu from other viral or bacterial respiratory illnesses based on symptoms alone. There are tests available to diagnose flu.

Q: Is there a treatment for the flu?

A: If you get sick with flu, antiviral drugs may be a treatment option.

Check with your doctor promptly if you are at high risk of serious flu complications and you get flu symptoms. People at high risk of flu complications include young children, adults 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, and people with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease

Prevention

Q: How can I help protect myself?

A: The first and most important step in preventing flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. The following everyday preventive actions are also highly recommended:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Do not share food, drink, eating utensils or vapes.
- Avoid contact with others who are sick.
- Isolate yourself when you are sick.
- Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

Public Health Response and Current Situation

Q: What is CDC doing about the seasonal flu?

A: The Influenza Division at CDC collects, compiles and analyzes information on influenza activity year-round in the United States. [FluView](#), a weekly influenza surveillance report, and [FluView Interactive](#), an online application which allows for more in-depth exploration of influenza surveillance data, are updated each week.

Q: Am I at risk?

A: Anyone can get flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to flu can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years.

Q: How many people in the United States are infected?

A: Influenza activity in the United States is currently very high. The CDC estimates 19 **MILLION** cases and 10,000 deaths in the US so far this season. In Connecticut, there have been 23 deaths related to influenza.