

FactSheet

Seasonal Flu

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The flu is a contagious respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. Most healthy people recover from the flu without complications. However, in an average year, the flu causes 30,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations in the United States, mostly among people 65 years or older.

People at Risk

The following people may be at risk for serious complications from the flu:

- People over 65 years old
- Young children under 2 years old
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic medical conditions such as:
 - Arthritis
 - Asthma
 - Cancer
 - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
 - Diabetes
 - Dialysis patients
 - Emphysema
 - Heart disease and stroke
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Hypertension (high blood pressure)
 - Transplant patients

Flu Symptoms

Symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Tiredness

- Headache
- Congestion
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Vomiting and diarrhea can occur but are more common in children

Complications caused by the flu include:

- Pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

How the Flu is Spread

When a person with the flu coughs or sneezes, droplets containing the influenza virus are released into the air. The droplets can be inhaled by healthy people nearby and cause infection.

Occasionally a person may become infected by touching a surface contaminated by the flu virus (door knob, faucet, etc.) and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.

Symptoms of the flu usually occur within one to three days after a person has been exposed to the virus.

How can the flu be prevented?

The single best method of preventing the flu is to get a flu vaccination each fall.

- Flu vaccination can keep you from getting sick from flu. Protecting yourself from flu also protects the people around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness.

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- Flu vaccination can help protect people who are at greater risk of getting seriously ill from flu, like older adults, people with chronic health conditions and young children (especially infants younger than 6 months old who are too young to get vaccinated).
- Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.
- Flu vaccination can reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalizations.

If You Get The Flu

Stay home when you are sick

- You can infect others one day before getting symptoms and up to five days after getting sick. You may be spreading the flu without even realizing it.
- Get plenty of rest, and [seek medical attention](#) if you do not feel better in a few days.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Keep household surfaces clean.
- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco.

General advice if you think you have the flu

- If you are sick with the flu, you may be ill for a week or longer. Stay home, unless you need medical care or other necessities, 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 or school until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine like acetomenophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil).
- If you leave the house to seek medical care, wear a facemask.
- 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.

Flu Medicine

Prescription [antiviral medications](#) may provide some benefit if started within two days of the first symptoms of flu. See your doctor as soon as symptoms appear if you are interested in antiviral medication.

[Antibiotics](#) are not effective against the flu virus.

Over-the-counter medications may relieve the symptoms of the flu.

Never give aspirin to children or teenagers with flu-like symptoms, particularly fever, because it has been associated with a dangerous illness called [Reye syndrome](#).

There is no scientific evidence that [vitamins](#), herbal, homeopathic or other folk remedies have any benefit against the flu.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your doctor, the Southern Nevada Health District's Office of Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance at (702) 759-1300 or the Immunization Clinic at (702) 759-0850.



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