



What is influenza?

A virus that infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs), causing mild to severe illness, and in some cases, it can lead to death.

What is the difference between the flu and a cold?

- They are caused by different viruses.
- The flu is a more **severe** illness, it lasts **longer** & onset of symptoms is **abrupt** and more **intense**.
- Colds generally do not result in serious health problems.
- Children with influenza may present with diarrhoea, vomiting and otitis media

How is the flu spread?

- Droplet spread - (can be propelled up to 1 meter) from infected persons coughing or sneezing.
- Contact spread - (by touching respiratory droplets on another person or object and then touching own, or someone else's, mouth or nose before washing their hands.)

Who is affected by flu?

- *Influenza viruses cause disease among all age groups.*
- Infection is highest among children.
- Serious illness and death is highest among those ≥ 65 years.
- There is an increased risk for those with chronic medical conditions.

What should I do if I get the flu?

- **Stay at home and rest!**
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- No alcohol or tobacco
- Take medication to relieve symptoms (*never* give aspirin to children / teenagers who have flu-like symptoms without first speaking to your doctor.)
- Seek medical attention

When are you infectious?

- Adults may be infectious from one day before symptoms and for 3 - 7 days after onset of illness
- Children can be infectious for ≥ 4 days before symptoms and for ≥ 7 days after onset of illness.
- Severely immunocompromised persons can shed the virus for weeks or months.

After contact, when might I get sick?

On average, about 2 days

How can the flu be prevented?

The **single** best way is to be **immunised** each year. Flu vaccination is free to all Health Care Workers and
Always:

- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after use.
- **Wash your hands with soap and water** especially after you cough or sneeze.
- **Keep your environment clean.** Influenza virus is destroyed by heat, soap, alcohol solutions, iodine and chlorine.
- **Stay home when you are sick.** Try to limit contact with others and take some time to rest.

Did you know?

Over 2500 **Australians** die each year from influenza and its complications.

Studies have shown that human influenza viruses can **survive** on surfaces for between 2 and 8 hours.

Resources

<http://www.fightflu.gov.au/asp/index.asp>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>