



Tarrant County Public Health

A healthier community through leadership in health strategy

The Facts About Influenza (Flu)

What is the FLU (also called influenza)?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to hospitalization or death.

What are the symptoms of FLU?

People who have flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms: fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, body aches, headaches and fatigue. Some may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children.

How does FLU spread?

Experts believe flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when sick people cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. A person may also get flu by touching a surface that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes or nose.

How long is someone contagious with FLU?

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

Is FLU serious?

Flu is unpredictable and the severity of seasons varies widely. Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get flu. This includes older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease).

How can you prevent FLU?

The single best way is to get a flu vaccine each season. Also, wash your hands often. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth since germs often spread when a person touches a contaminated object. If sick, keep your distance from others. Stay at home from work, school and errands.

When to get vaccinated against FLU?

Annual flu vaccination should begin as soon as vaccine is available. Since it takes about two weeks to become effective, it's best that people get vaccinated before flu begins spreading in their community. While seasonal outbreaks can happen as early as October, flu activity typically peaks in January or later.

Who should get FLU vaccine?

Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu vaccine. It's especially important for people at high risk of developing serious complications (like pneumonia), people with certain medical conditions (including asthma, diabetes and chronic lung disease), pregnant women, children younger than five years, adults 65 years and older, and people living with and caring for those at high risk of developing serious complications.

Should young children get FLU vaccine?

Children younger than six months are at higher risk of serious flu complications, but are too young to get a flu vaccine. If you live with or care for an infant younger than six months of age, you should get a flu vaccine to help protect them from flu.

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