



Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Influenza (Flu)

What is it?

- Influenza (“the flu”) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus that affects your nose, throat and lungs.
- Most people who get the flu recover within 7-10 days.
- Some people can become very ill and need medical attention.
- It can lead to complications which may result in hospitalization or death.
- People at greatest risk of flu-related complications are adults and children with chronic illnesses, people who live in long-term care homes and other chronic care facilities, people 65 years of age and older, children under 5 years of age, indigenous peoples and pregnant women.

What are common symptoms of the flu?

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Watery eyes
- Muscles aches and pain
- Extreme weakness and tiredness
- Some people may have nausea/vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

How is it spread?

- The flu spreads mostly through coughing and sneezing. It can also be spread by touching a surface that has the flu virus and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.

A person can spread the flu virus from one day before symptoms start and up to 5 days after becoming sick. Children and people with weakened immune systems may spread the virus for a longer time.



How to protect yourself and others from the flu?

- Get your flu vaccine early each year. It's the best way to prevent getting and spreading the flu.
- Clean your hands often using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your upper sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- Keep common surfaces and items clean and disinfected.

What to do if you or your loved one has the flu?

- Stay home and get plenty of rest.
- Stay hydrated. Drink lots of fluids and avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
- Take basic pain or fever relievers but do not give acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) to children or teenagers under the age of 18.
- Treat muscle pain using a hot water bottle or heating pad. Apply heat for short periods of time.
- Use spray or saline nose drops to treat a stuffy nose.
- Avoid tobacco and second-hand smoke, which can make symptoms worse.
- Seek medical care if symptoms do not go away in a few days or get worse.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

