



Seasonal Influenza (Flu)

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2012-2013 Flu Season

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CDC Says "Take 3" Actions To Fight The Flu

Flu is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

CDC urges you to take the following actions to protect yourself and others from influenza (the flu):



Take time to get a flu vaccine.



- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
- While there are many different flu viruses, a flu vaccine protects against the three viruses that research suggests will be most common. (See upcoming season's [Vaccine Virus Selection](#) for this season's vaccine composition.)
- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine as soon as the [current season's vaccines](#) are available.
- Vaccination of [high risk persons](#) is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
- [People at high risk of serious flu complications](#) include young children, [pregnant women](#), people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and [people 65 years and older](#).
- Vaccination also is important for [health care workers](#), and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to high risk people.
- [Children younger than 6 months](#) are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for them should be vaccinated instead.



Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

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- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an [alcohol-based hand rub](#).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- See [Everyday Preventive Actions](#) [257 KB, 2 pages] and [Nonpharmaceutical Interventions \(NPIs\)](#) for more information about actions, apart from getting vaccinated and taking medicine, that people and communities can take to help slow the spread of illnesses like influenza (flu).



[Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.](#)



- If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can treat your illness.
- Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
- Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications. [For people with high risk factors](#) [702 KB, 2 pages], treatment with an antiviral drug can mean the difference between having a milder illness versus a very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay.
- Studies show that flu antiviral drugs work best for treatment when they are started within 2 days of getting sick, but starting them later can still be helpful, especially if the sick person has a high-risk health or is very sick from the flu. Follow your doctor's instructions for taking this drug.
- Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Visit CDC's website to find out [what to do if you get sick with the flu](#) and how to care for someone at home who is sick with the flu.



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