



# Seasonal Influenza

## Flu

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### What is Influenza?

Seasonal influenza, commonly called “the flu”, is a virus that affects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). The flu can cause severe illness or even life-threatening complications in many people. Flu season occurs during the fall and winter in the US and usually peaks anywhere from November to March.

### How is the flu spread?

The flu virus can be spread by large respiratory droplets from an infected person’s cough or sneeze. Droplet transmission is possible up to 6 feet away. It is also possible, though less common, for a person to become infected after touching a surface or object contaminated with the flu virus and touching their own nose or mouth.

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of the flu can range from mild to severe, but come on suddenly. Symptoms can last anywhere from a few days to 2 weeks. A person infected with the flu may experience some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle/body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are more commonly seen in children with the flu

Many complications are associated with the flu, and can be life-threatening. Pneumonia, bronchitis, ear infections and sinus infections are common complications. Chronic health conditions can worsen with the flu including asthma, congestive heart failure, and diabetes.

### How is the flu prevented?

The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine every year, as soon as it is available. Flu vaccine is recommended for anyone over the age of 6 months (except for individuals with medical contraindications). Other forms of prevention include proper hand washing, use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and staying away from sick individuals.

### School Exclusion Policy:

Children with fever associated with the flu are required to be excluded from school until they are fever-free for 24 hours, without the use of fever reducing medication.

### Resources:

Center for Disease Control & Prevention- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>

Texas Department of State Health Services- <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/influenza/>

November 2014, 2017A, 2018A