

# Influenza

## Information for patients and families

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### What is influenza or the flu?

- Influenza is a respiratory (breathing) illness which can affect the nose, throat and lungs. It is commonly called the flu. The flu can be caused by different types of influenza viruses.
- The flu occurs during the winter months usually between November to April. If you get the flu you may have:
  - cough
  - sudden fever
  - chills
  - sore throat
  - muscle aches and pains
  - headache
  - tired or weak feeling
- Most people who get the flu will feel ill for about 2 to 7 days. Some people get sicker and may need to go to the doctor's office or emergency room. The flu can lead to pneumonia, hospitalization and death. The elderly and those with chronic medical conditions such as heart or lung problems can become quite sick when they get the flu.

### How does the flu spread?

- The flu can spread easily from person to person by coughing or sneezing. It can also be spread by wiping your nose, mouth or eyes after touching a contaminated surface or shaking a person's hand.
- You may feel sick from the flu 1 to 4 days after you are infected. Adults can spread the flu to others from the day before they get sick and up to 5 to 7 days after their flu symptoms start. Children can spread the flu for more than 7 days after they start feeling sick.

## What can I do to prevent the flu?

- Get the flu shot.
- Always wash your hands before touching your face, before eating meals and after using the toilet.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, then throw the tissue out. Cough into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue. Wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- If you are in the hospital, you will be cared for using Droplet Contact Precautions (isolation). Staff and visitors will wear a gown and/or gloves, mask and face shield.

## What should I do if I get the flu?

- Rest, drink plenty of fluids and take medication such as Ibuprofen and Acetaminophen to lessen the fever and body aches.
- Children and teens should not take Aspirin or Salicylates.
- Antiviral medication such as Tamiflu and/or Relenza may reduce the severity of illness if started within 48 hours of getting sick.
- Contact your family doctor for advice if your symptoms get worse.
- **Visitors** should not come to the hospital when they are sick.

## For more information visit:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization-vaccines.html>

Immunize Canada

<https://immunize.ca/>

**Adherence to Infection Prevention and Control measures by staff and visitors is required to prevent the spread of infection.**

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.  
Clean your hands.**



This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.