

Seasonal Influenza (Flu) Fact Sheet

What is Seasonal Influenza?

Influenza, or the flu, is a contagious disease caused by a virus. Flu season in the United States is generally from September – May.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms typically start suddenly, and appear 1-4 days after exposure. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Muscle/body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue

Children may also develop vomiting or diarrhea

Severe complications can also develop, including:

- Pneumonia
- Ear infections
- Dehydration

A person is typically contagious 1 day before onset of symptoms, and up to 7-10 days after onset of symptoms.

Transmission (How it spreads)

- Respiratory droplet; via coughing or sneezing
- Close contact with an infected person

Diagnosis and Treatment

Testing is available; diagnosis may also occur through the identification of symptoms

Antiviral medication is available, and is most effective if started within 48 hours of symptom onset.

Rest and hydration are key

Acetaminophen or ibuprofen may also be taken

Prevention:

Receiving an annual flu shot decreases the risk of contracting the flu

Other means of prevention include:

- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Practice good hand hygiene
- Stay home when sick

Who is at Risk?

Everyone is at risk of contracting the flu! Children, the elderly, and those who are immunocompromised are at higher risk of illness and suffering severe complications.