



10 Facts About the Flu

Fact 1

Influenza is much worse than a bad cold

Commonly known as the flu, influenza is an infection in the airways caused by the influenza virus. The flu is easily caught and spread. Although some symptoms may be cold-like (see comparison chart below), they are far more serious: headache, chills and dry cough are rapidly accompanied by body aches and fever. While the fever declines on the second or third day of the illness, full recovery may take up to 6 weeks.

Symptom	Cold	Influenza
Fever	Rare	Unusual, high fever (102°F/39°C–104°F/40°C), sudden onset, lasts 3–4 days
Headache	Rare	Unusual, can be severe
General aches & pains	Sometimes, mild	Unusual, often severe
Fatigue and weakness	Sometimes, mild	Usual, severe, may last 2–3 weeks or more
Extreme fatigue	Unusual	Usual, early onset, can be severe
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Common
Chest discomfort, coughing	Sometimes, mild to moderate	Usual, can become severe
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure, can worsen a current chronic condition, can be life-threatening
Prevention	Frequent hand-washing	Annual vaccination and frequent hand-washing

Fact 2

Influenza can lead to severe complications

While most people recover fully, for thousands of people each year influenza may lead to more severe and life-threatening illnesses – such as pneumonia – resulting in hospitalization and even death. Vaccination is the only prevention measure that has been proven to reduce mortality rates caused by influenza.

Fact 3

Immunization is the most effective prevention

It's true! While a good diet, vitamins and exercise all contribute to your general health, they may not be enough to protect you from the influenza virus, especially if you already have a medical condition. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends the flu shot for anyone who wants protection from influenza, as studies show that immunization is effective in preventing the flu in all segments of the population. Furthermore, it reduces seriousness of the disease should you contract it.

Fact 4

Protecting yourself protects others

As people get vaccinated, the influenza virus has less chance to multiply and circulate. If you do not get the flu, you cannot spread it to people around you, benefiting those who may be at risk of severe complications from influenza.



Fact 5

For some people, immunization is especially important

- Anyone with chronic heart or lung disease, such as asthma or cystic fibrosis
- Anyone with diabetes or another metabolic disease, cancer, kidney disease, a blood disorder, or a weakened immune system
- Anyone who is 65 or older, or who lives, works or volunteers in a nursing home, chronic care facility, retirement home or other health care setting
- Emergency service workers including fire, police and ambulance staff
- Anyone travelling to places where the flu virus is likely circulating
- Anyone who lives in the same household or is in contact with people at risk, such as those mentioned above
- Healthy children aged 6–23 months

Fact 6

Some people should not get the flu shot

- Anyone who has had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous immunization
- Anyone who has known anaphylactic hypersensitivity to eggs, manifested as hives, swelling of the mouth and throat, difficulty breathing, hypotension and/or shock. If you are allergic to eggs, consult your doctor
- Children who are under 6 months of age
- Anyone with a fever on the day they are supposed to receive their flu shot (please reschedule)

Fact 7

Pregnant or breastfeeding women can get the flu shot

The influenza vaccine is considered safe and may be beneficial for pregnant women at all stages of pregnancy and for breastfeeding mothers.

Fact 8

Side effects are minor

Most commonly, mild soreness at the vaccination site is the only side effect. Less common are headaches and muscle pain. As a precaution, you will be asked to remain at the pharmacy for 15–20 minutes following vaccination.

Fact 9

The flu vaccine can't give you the flu

In order to offer you the most effective protection, the vaccine must contain part of the virus itself, but the virus is dead and cannot give you the flu.

Fact 10

New flu strains mean a new vaccine each year

Each year the World Health Organization identifies the particular strains of the flu that the new vaccine must protect against. The vaccine is then produced to be most effective against those strains. Therefore, you need to receive the new vaccine each year to be effectively protected against influenza. October to April is flu season. The best time to get the flu shot is at the start of the flu season, before you get exposed to the virus.