

What is influenza?



Influenza, or the flu, is a very contagious infection that affects the lungs.

Flu is very serious. It can result in people being hospitalised, especially young kids under 5 years, people over 65 years, pregnant women and those who have diabetes, lung or heart disease.

The flu virus that spreads every year is different. Because of this, experts need to change the vaccine every time to make sure it gives your body the right kind of protection. This is why it's very important for you to get the flu shot every year.

You can lessen your chances of getting sick with the flu if you get vaccinated. The flu shot is safe and effective. It helps you to fight the virus and helps stop it from spreading to other people.

Symptoms

You will usually get flu symptoms 1 to 3 days after being infected/exposed to the virus.

Some of the symptoms are:



Fever



Muscle or joint pain



Sore throat



Tiredness



Dry cough



Nausea (feeling sick), vomiting or diarrhoea (loose and runny poo) mostly among kids.



Headaches



Confusion, shortness of breath – among elderly people.



How it spreads

The flu virus can spread when infected people cough or sneeze without covering their mouth and nose with their elbow or a tissue. It can also spread when you touch dirty surfaces that have the virus and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes after.

How to prevent the spread of flu

Here are 7 steps to help fight the flu:



Get the flu shot every year.



Keep a 1.5 metre distance from people who cough and sneeze.



Wash your hands with soap and water. Or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.



Clean commonly used surfaces with a clean, wet towel. Dry them after.



Stay home if you are unwell. Avoid contact with others.



Don't share items or anything which has touched the mouth or nose.



Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.

Treatment

There is no treatment for the flu. But you can best manage it by:

- Taking lots of rest
- Drinking plenty of water
- Taking pain medicines to help lessen your symptoms.

Where to get your flu shot

You can get your flu shot from your GP, community immunisation clinic or pharmacy. It is free for some people. To find out if you qualify, check with your GP or immunisation provider.