

# What all healthcare workers need to know about **THE FLU**

## WHAT IS THE FLU?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious flu complications.

The flu usually starts suddenly and may include a fever (usually high), headache, tiredness (can be extreme), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, diarrhea, and vomiting (more common among children than adults). Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

Most healthy adults can infect others with the flu 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you can pass on the flu to someone else, even before you know you are sick.

**That's why it's so important for you to help prevent the spread of flu by getting a flu shot.**



## Tips to prevent the spread of illness

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then throw the tissue away.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work and other social gatherings to avoid giving the flu to someone else.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

## Ask your clinical director or administrator about getting a flu shot.

## What can I do to recover faster?

- Rest
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Avoid using alcohol or tobacco
- Take medication to relieve the symptoms of the flu (*but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms - and particularly fever - without first speaking to your doctor.*)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Seasonal Flu. Available at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov). Accessed July 20, 2010.

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