

Key Facts about Seasonal Influenza

What is Seasonal Influenza?

Seasonal Influenza, also known as “the flu”, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It attacks the respiratory tract in humans (nose, throat, and lungs). Seasonal influenza usually occurs during the months of November through April.

Seasonal influenza A or B viruses cause epidemics of disease almost every winter. In the United States, seasonal influenza epidemics can cause illness in 10% to 20% of the population and are associated with an average of 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations each year.

What are the symptoms of seasonal influenza?

Seasonal Influenza is different from a cold. It usually comes on suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Body aches

How does Seasonal influenza spread?

Seasonal Influenza is spread, or transmitted, when a person who has the flu cough, sneezes, or speaks and sends the flu virus into the air, and other people inhale the virus. The virus enters through the nose, throat or lungs of the next person and begins to multiply, causing symptoms of seasonal influenza. A person with seasonal influenza is contagious starting the day before symptoms start and can continue for up to 1 week.

Is there a vaccine available to protect me from seasonal influenza?

Yes. The seasonal influenza vaccine is inactivated vaccine that is given as a shot or a live attenuated vaccine given as a nasal spray. Everyone 6 months of age and older should receive the vaccine every fall, unless there are contraindications.

I had a seasonal Flu vaccine last year. Will that protect me this year?

No. The seasonal flu virus strains change from year to year.



How can I protect myself?

The single best way to protect against seasonal influenza each year is to be vaccinated. Public Health authorities recommend the following health and wellness behaviors:

- Avoid using others personal items such as cell phones, keyboards or touchpads, drinking or eating utensils.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are sick. Seasonal influenza is spread mainly by person-to-person contact through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- Drink plenty of fluids, eat a well-balanced diet.
- Get plenty of rest.

What should I do if I get sick?

- If you get sick with influenza, you should stay in your room and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. Do not go to class, work, the library, or other public places until you are without a fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. Use your own thermometer. Symptoms should improve within 3-4 days, if not, make an appointment at MUMC.
- Contact your medical provider or MUMC for antiviral medication if you are pregnant or have a chronic illness such as asthma, diabetes, chronic heart disease, liver disease, kidney disease, or any other serious illness that may increase your chances of complications of influenza.
- Disinfect common surfaces such as countertops, door knobs, light switches, etc.
- Wash your hands frequently, and continue to cover your cough and sneezes with tissues or your sleeve.
- Remember to contact your professors promptly if you have to miss class due to illness so appropriate accommodations can be made.
- Rest, drink plenty of fluids and use pain and fever reducers such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen, as directed, to manage body aches and fever.
- Avoid aspirin containing products.
- Emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:
 - ✓ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - ✓ Pain or pressure in chest or abdomen
 - ✓ Sudden dizziness
 - ✓ Confusion
 - ✓ Severe or persistent vomiting

For more information: www.cdc.gov/flu



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For more information, please visit the Marquette University Medical Clinic website at www.marquette.edu/medical-clinic or call us at (414) 288-7184