

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INFLUENZA

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What is influenza?

- Influenza (flu) is an illness caused by infection with the influenza virus.
- Flu symptoms include fever, cough, body aches, tiredness, sore throat, and runny nose.
- Usually, flu is not serious and persons recover completely. However, older persons, very young children, and persons with long-term conditions can get very sick or even die of flu or its complications.

What is the difference between regular flu and novel H1N1 (swine) flu?

- Novel H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people.
- Novel H1N1 spreads from person to person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread, but occurs outside the regular flu season.
- Although regular flu is most serious in older persons, novel H1N1 seems to affect younger persons more than older persons.
- Symptoms of novel H1N1 are similar to regular flu, but many patients also have diarrhea, which usually doesn't occur in regular flu.

How can you keep from getting the flu or spreading it to other people?

- Get a flu shot every fall if you are aged 6 months to 18 years or 50 years or older; have diabetes, heart or lung disease, or other health problems; or live with or take care of an older person, someone with health problems, or children younger than 5 years.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water and try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school.



How will I know if I have the flu or something else?

- Doctors usually can make the diagnosis without special tests, especially when symptoms occur during a local outbreak.
- Your doctor may need to do tests to rule out other illnesses.

Call your doctor if you have the flu and you:

- Have a high fever for more than 3 days
- Are short of breath
- Cannot eat or drink

What can I do for the fever, cough, and aches of the flu?

- Fluids and medicines to lower fever are helpful.
- Flu medicines do not cure the flu, but they may shorten the time you are sick. They are most effective when started within 1 to 2 days of the first symptoms.

For More Information

Web Sites with Good Information about Influenza

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/flu

American Lung Association
www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK900E&t=35426

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
www3.niaid.nih.gov/healthscience/healthtopics/Flu/aboutFlu/DefinitionsOverview.htm

American Thoracic Society
www.thoracic.org/sections/education/patient-education/patient-education-materials/patient-information-series/what-is-the-flu.html

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