

2010-2011 Cold and Flu Update
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What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

They both are respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Because of the similarities in symptoms, it can be hard to tell the difference. In general, the flu is worse than a common cold. With the flu, symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme fatigue and dry cough are much more common and more intense than with a cold and may result in hospitalizations for some. Cold symptoms are usually milder and are typically confined to runny or stuffy noses or a mild cough. Colds rarely are serious.

How can you tell the difference between a cold and the flu?

If you are unable to determine by symptoms alone, there are special tests that can diagnosis the flu. However, these tests must be done in the first few days of illness in order to be accurate.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people, usually children, may have vomiting and diarrhea with certain strains. People may be infected with the flu and have respiratory symptoms **without a fever**. Severe illnesses and deaths have occurred as a result of illness associated with the flu virus.

How does flu virus spread?

Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How long is a person contagious?

People infected with seasonal flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

What are the complications of flu?

Complications include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of existing medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

Who is at high risk for developing flu-related complications?

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- Also, last flu season, American Indians and Alaskan Natives seemed to be at higher risk of flu complications
- People who have medical conditions including:
 - Asthma (even if it's controlled or mild)
 - Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury]
 - Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
 - Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
 - Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
 - Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
 - Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
 - People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
 - People who are morbidly obese (Body Mass Index [BMI] of 40 or greater)

How do I prevent the flu?

1. The "flu" shot – which is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. This shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women
2. The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that DO NOT cause the flu. This is sometimes called LAIV for "live attenuated influenza vaccine". LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

What's new about the flu vaccine for this season?

1. Only 1 vaccine is being made this year and most people will only need to get vaccinated once. **There is one exception to this: CDC**

recommends that children ages 6 months through 8 years who have never received a seasonal flu vaccination get two (2) doses of vaccine spaced at least 4 weeks apart

2. The new recommendation is that all people 6 months and older receive annual flu vaccinations.

Who should get a flu vaccine this season?

All people 6 months and older are now recommended to receive annual flu vaccinations.

What viruses will this season's vaccine protect against?

The flu vaccine is updated every season based on information regarding those most likely to cause illness for the season. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus and two other viruses (H3N2 and an influenza B virus).

Will protection by the vaccination be immediate?

No. It takes about 2 weeks for antibodies provided by the vaccine that protect against influenza to develop in the body. So, it is very important to avoid infected persons during those 2 weeks.

I was vaccinated last year. Do I need to be vaccinated again this year?

Yes. The flu vaccine is updated each season, and immunity diminishes over time, so even if you received the 2009 vaccine, you may not be protected for this season.

When and where can I get the flu vaccine this season?

Vaccines have begun shipping from manufacturers and should be available for distribution by November. You can get the vaccine from your health care provider, public clinics and some pharmacies.

What can I do to stay healthy?

- Get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best protection we have against flu. Seasonal flu vaccine is available now and initial doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine also are available, with additional doses available later this year.
- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- Take everyday actions to stay healthy.
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread that way.
 - Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- Find healthy ways to deal with stress and anxiety.
- Stay informed. The CDC is updated regularly as information becomes available. The website is www.cdc.gov.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention