

# Influenza

## Frequently Asked Questions



### What is influenza?

Influenza or the “flu” is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory system. Influenza can cause mild to severe illness, with death resulting in some cases.

### What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of influenza can include:

- Fever
- Sore Throat
- Body Aches
- Tiredness
- Coughing
- Diarrhea
- Nausea/Vomiting

### How does it spread?

An infected person can spread influenza to another individual through coughing or sneezing. Touching common surface areas, such as a doorknob, may also spread influenza.

### Who is at risk of getting influenza?

Anyone is at risk for becoming infected with influenza. However, the following groups are at a greater risk for severe problems:

- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- Those with chronic health conditions (asthma, diabetes, or heart disease)

### How is it diagnosed and treated?

Influenza is diagnosed by collecting a nasal or throat sample, which is sent to a laboratory for further testing. Antiviral medications prescribed by your doctor can be used to treat influenza, if given at least two days after symptoms begin. The course of treatment is usually 5 days. Finally, it is important to drink fluids, take medications that relieve symptoms, and get plenty of rest.

### What should I do if I think I have it?

Contact your doctor if you have any of the previously mentioned symptoms because further examination may be needed to determine if you are experiencing complications related to the influenza virus.

### How is it prevented?

- The best way to prevent influenza is by getting vaccinated. Vaccination helps your body fight off the viruses that cause flu.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol based gels and cover your cough.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick with a fever and a cough.

*For more information contact your doctor, refer to <http://www.phila.gov/Health/> or contact the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6740.*

