pennsylvania
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Ready PA
www.Ready.PA.gov

MONTHLY
DECEMBER 2019

Ask a Health Care Professional

Influenza (also called the "flu") activity is increasing. Now is the time to get a flu vaccine! Learn about influenza and how you can protect yourself and your family as we ask a Health Care Professional some important questions and get answers about this year's flu season.

What is influenza?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness and, at times, can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

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- Ready PA Tip Sheet: Flu Prevention Tips

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

- fever
- headache
- tiredness (can be extreme)
- dry cough
- sore throat
- nasal congestion
- body aches

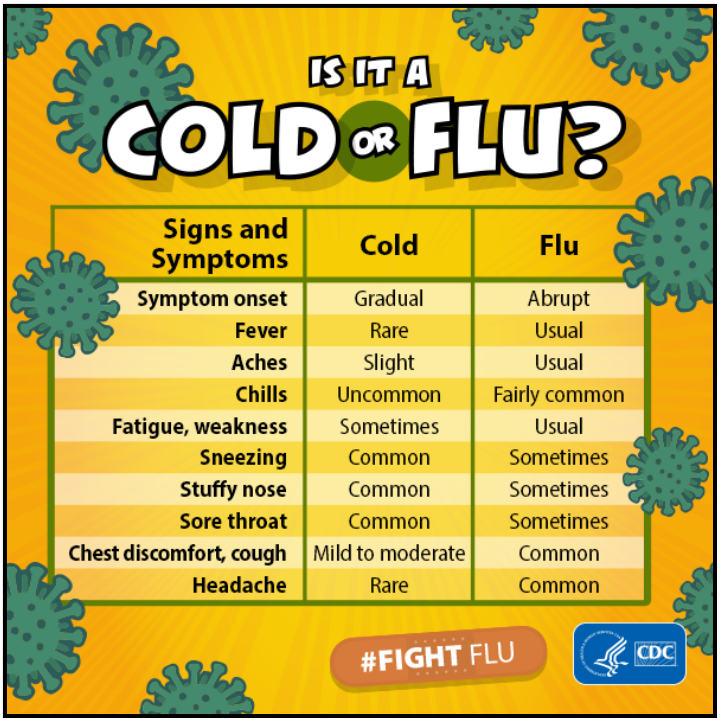
How do you protect yourself from the flu?

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine each season. It takes about two weeks for the antibodies from the vaccine to develop protection against infection.

In addition to getting vaccinated, Pennsylvanians are encouraged to practice healthy habits like covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, frequently washing your hands during flu season, and remembering to disinfect commonly touched objects, such as door knobs, light switches, countertops, cell phones and computers.

If you do become sick with the flu, it is important to stay home and rest. If you are at risk for developing serious complications from the flu, or feel extremely ill, you should see a medical professional immediately.

To learn more about the flu, visit the Pennsylvania Department of Health at: https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Flu/Pages/Flu.aspx

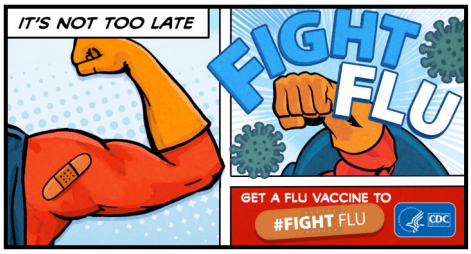


Signs and Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Symptom onset	Gradual	Abrupt
Fever	Rare	Usual
Aches	Slight	Usual
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly common
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Usual
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate	Common
Headache	Rare	Common

Ask a Health Care Professional continued

What three actions can I take to fight the flu season?

1. **Get a flu vaccine.** Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine by the end of October. Getting a flu vaccine every year provides the best protection against flu.

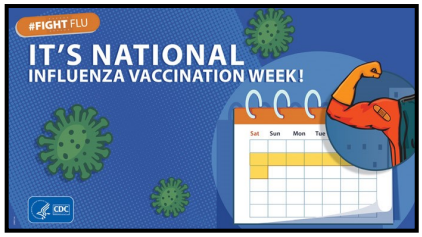


2. **Take everyday actions to stop the spread of germs.** Try to avoid close contact with sick people, and if you become sick, limit your contact with others. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands often.

3. **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them**. If you get sick with flu, prescription flu antiviral drugs can be used to treat flu illness. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?
Flu vaccines are available at your doctor's office, pharmacy, local walk-in clinic or grocery store. You can also find the nearest flu vaccine clinic by visiting: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/flu-finder-widget.html. Simply enter your zip code or city and state to find mapped locations of flu vaccine clinics near you.

National Influenza Vaccination Week
December 1—7, 2019



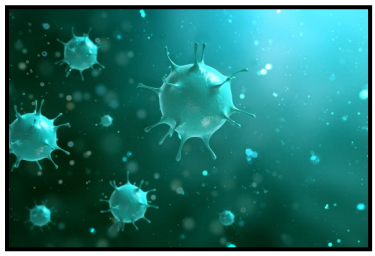
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond.

Previous flu vaccination coverage data have shown that few people get vaccinated against influenza after the end of November. The CDC and its partners choose December for NIVW to remind people that even though the holiday season has begun, it is not too late to get a flu vaccine. There are many reasons why it is not too late!

- As long as flu viruses are spreading and causing illness, vaccination should continue throughout flu season in order to protect as many people as possible against flu.

- Vaccination efforts should continue through the holiday season and beyond. It is not too late to vaccinate.

- While vaccination is recommended before the end of October, getting vaccinated later can still be beneficial during most seasons for people who have put it off.



- Even if have already gotten sick with flu, you can still benefit from vaccination since many different flu viruses spread during flu season and most flu vaccine protects against four different flu viruses.

Know Before You Go—Holiday Travel

Holiday Travel Safety

Winter weather can occur anywhere and can include freezing rain, ice, snow, high winds or a combination of all these conditions. Since holidays are traditionally a time of travel for families and many people choose vehicle travel, you should always know the weather before you go.

If you are on the road in winter weather, drive slower than normal and leave room between you and surrounding vehicles when roads are wet, snowy, or icy. DO NOT use cruise control, brake quickly, or take sharp turns.

STAY ALERT! Make sure you keep your gas tank over half full and keep a close eye on road conditions, which can change rapidly. On road trips, take breaks often so you can stay focused on the road.

It is important to minimize your travel during a winter storm. Even if winter weather conditions are not obviously present, conditions like black ice can cause vehicles to lose control.

Sign Up for Alerts… Stay informed. Stay Safe!

Join the AlertPA notification system by CodeRED for emergency and weather related alerts, health notifications, building alerts, and other updates from commonwealth and federal agencies.

Click here to sign up for:
CodeRED®

*One message per alerting event. Message and data rates may apply.

A CodeRED Weather Warning will automatically alert you if your address falls in the path of severe weather, as determined by the National Weather Service.

511PA can send email to travelers who sign up for Personal Travel Alerts, and lets you tailor your notifications for all roadways on the 511PA core network. It is easy to sign up to tailor your alerts to only those roadways in which you are interested.

Don't want alerts on the weekends? No problem. You can specify that you only want email alerts on weekdays. Only want email alerts before you start your daily commute? Just say what time of day you would like them to start and end.

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Preparedness Events in December

National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 1 - 7)
(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/index.htm)

PLEASE NOTE: In early 2020, the Ready PA monthly newsletter is going digital! To make sure you continue to receive this monthly newsletter, please sign up at:

https://www.ready.pa.gov/Pages/Subscribe.aspx

Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: www.pema.pa.gov
Ready PA: www.ready.pa.gov
SERVPA: www.serv.pa.gov
Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov
Office of the State Fire Commissioner: www.osfc.pa.gov
Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities: www.dobs.pa.gov
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: www.dcnr.pa.gov
Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Homeland Security: www.homelandsecurity.pa.gov
Pennsylvania Insurance Department: www.insurance.pa.gov
Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General: www.attorneygeneral.gov
Pennsylvania State Police: www.psp.pa.gov
PA511Connect: www.511pa.com

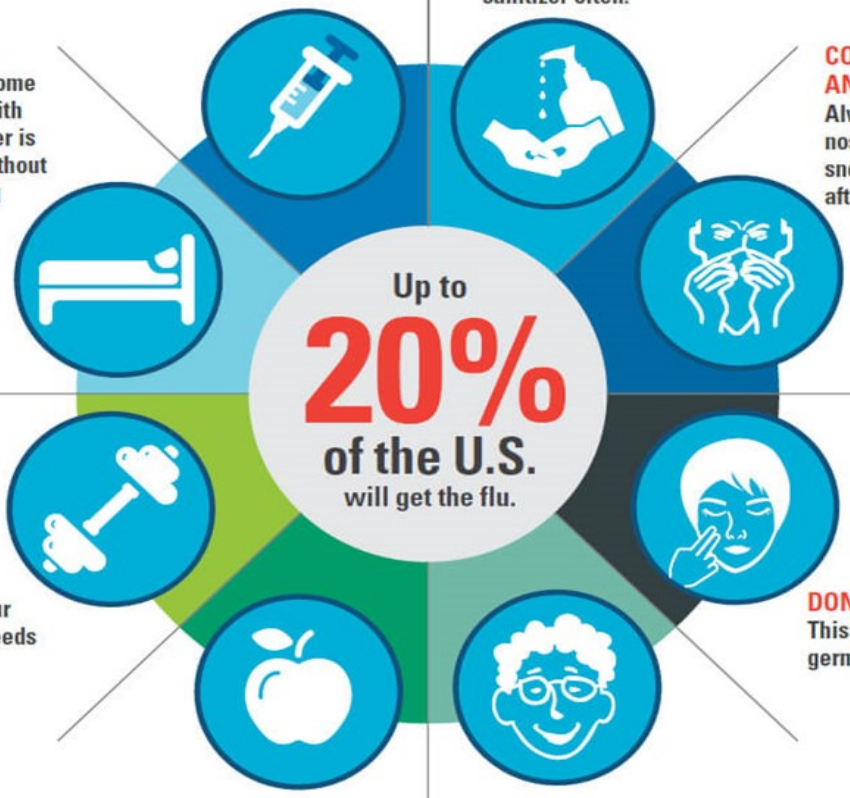
FLU PREVENTION TIPS

GET VACCINATED Influenza is the only respiratory virus preventable by vaccination.

KEEP HANDS CLEAN Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer often.

STAY HOME If you become ill, stay at home and avoid contact with others until your fever is gone for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

COVER YOUR MOUTH AND NOSE Always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after use and clean your hands.



EXERCISE It boosts your immune system and speeds recovery from illness.

DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE This is the easiest way for germs to get into your body.

EAT HEALTHY Eating healthy, balanced meals can strengthen your immune system.

SMILE Studies show that smiling can help boost your immune system.

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