

## How can influenza be treated?

### For adults

- Take rest and use medicines that reduce fever. Also, drink lots of fluids and take antiviral drugs as prescribed by a health care provider.



### Children 5 years and older

- In case of influenza-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cold, consult a doctor, as needed, and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.



### Children under 5 years of age

- If children have medical conditions (like asthma, a neurological condition, or diabetes) and develop influenza-like symptoms, consult a doctor. Children younger than 5 years who have chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of developing serious complications from influenza.



## Simple actions can prevent you from influenza

### What is seasonal influenza?

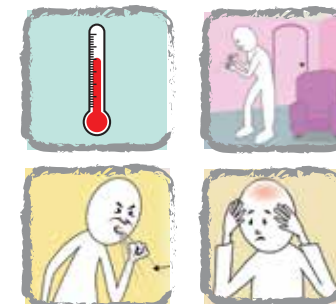
Seasonal influenza is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Influenza may occur throughout the year, however, it is more prevalent in the winter. It can spread easily from person to person and can affect anybody in any age group. The number of people infected each year by seasonal influenza has been rising.

Influenza can cause severe illness and death in high-risk populations, such as children, pregnant women, older people and people with chronic illnesses. Seasonal influenza exacts a huge toll on health systems by increasing costs and placing an additional burden on health care delivery.

### What are symptoms of influenza?

People who have influenza feel some or all of the following symptoms:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue.



In influenza, the cough can be severe and can last 2 or more weeks. Most people recover from fever and other symptoms within a week without requiring medical attention. Some people, especially children, may also experience diarrhoea and vomiting.

### How serious is influenza?

Seasonal influenza can be very serious, even among people who are otherwise healthy. Seasonal influenza can also cause pneumonia and may result in fatality among children, older people and those who are already chronically ill. Influenza occurs globally with an annual attack rate estimated at 5–10% in adults and 20%–30% in children. Every year a large proportion of influenza-related child deaths occur in developing countries.



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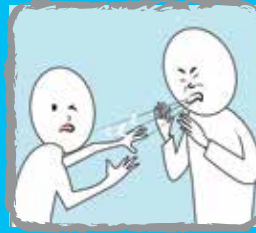


World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

## How does influenza spread?

The influenza virus is in the wet spray (droplets of saliva and mucus) that comes out of the nose and mouth of someone who coughs or sneezes. If you are close enough to a person with influenza (at least 1 metre) when they cough or sneeze, you may breathe in the virus and become ill. Influenza symptoms start 1–4 days (usually 2 days) after a person breathes in the virus.



Influenza spreads easily from person to person. The virus can also live for a short time on things you touch like doorknobs, phones and toys. After you touch these objects, you can catch the virus when you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes. Adults with influenza can spread it from about one day before symptoms appear to about one week after. Children can spread influenza for even longer after they get sick.

## Who is at risk?

Seasonal influenza epidemics can affect all populations, but the highest risk of aggravated complications can occur among:

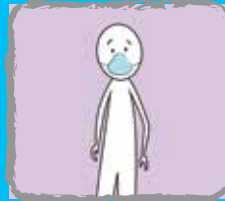
- children younger than 2 years
- adults aged 65 years or older
- pregnant women
- people of any age with certain medical conditions, such as chronic heart, lung, kidney, liver, blood or metabolic diseases (such as diabetes), or those who have weak immune systems.



## How can influenza be prevented?

The following simple steps can help prevent the spread of influenza.

- Get vaccinated every year before the start of winter and as soon as the vaccine is available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and dispose of any used tissues in a rubbish bin.
- Keep a safe distance of at least one metre from people infected with influenza.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth which spreads germs.
- Keep sick people in a separate room from others in the household, if possible.
- Throw away disposable items used by sick people in your household in a rubbish bin.



## Is getting an influenza vaccine the best thing to do?

Yes! The most effective way to prevent the disease is vaccination. Safe and effective vaccines are available and have been used for more than 60 years. Among healthy adults, influenza vaccine provides protection, even when circulating viruses may not exactly match the vaccine viruses. However, among older people, influenza vaccination may be less effective in preventing illness but reduces severity of disease and incidence of complications and deaths. Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of serious influenza complications, and for people who live with, or care for, high-risk individuals.

## Who should get the influenza vaccine?

Annual vaccination is important for:

- Children aged 6 months up to 18 years
- People 50 years of age and older
- Pregnant and postpartum women
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, like asthma, diabetes, heart diseases, kidney disease, neurologic and neuromuscular conditions and weakened immune system.
- Anyone who might transmit influenza to someone at risk, such as, health care workers, including those in training, emergency response workers, direct care staff, people who live with or care for anyone on the list above, and people who live with or care for infants under 6 months of age, including parents, siblings and daycare providers.



## Who should not get the influenza vaccine?

- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza shot in the past
- Children under 6 months of age
- People who are sick with a fever.



People who have severe egg allergies should be vaccinated in a medical setting and be supervised by a health care provider who is able to recognize and manage severe allergic conditions.

## When to get vaccinated?

The timing of influenza outbreaks is unpredictable. Seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October and last until May. It is best to get vaccinated before influenza viruses start to spread in your community as it takes about 2 weeks after vaccination for your body to develop antibodies to fight influenza. If possible, get your influenza vaccine by the end of October.