



INFLUENZA (FLU)

WHAT IS INFLUENZA (FLU)?

- Influenza (flu) is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses.
- There are two main types of human influenza viruses: A and B. Flu is more serious than the common cold and severe cases can result in breathing difficulties and life-threatening complications such as pneumonia.
- You can catch the flu anytime during the year but it is most common in autumn and winter.
- Getting the flu is even more likely if you have been in contact with someone who has the flu.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF FLU?

- The most common symptoms are:
- Fevers and chills
- Dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches and joint pains especially in lower back and legs
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Headaches
- Loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea (more common in children than adults)
- Symptoms may last for a few days or for more than a week.
- Some people can get very sick with severe breathing difficulties needing to be hospitalised.

HOW IS FLU SPREAD?

- Flu is spread by droplets made when people with the flu cough or sneeze.
- It can also be spread by touching surfaces or objects that have virus droplets from an infected person.
- People with influenza can spread it to others before they are sick as well as while they are sick.

A bout of the flu typically follows this pattern:

- Days 1–3: Sudden appearance of fever, headache, muscle pain and weakness, dry cough, sore throat and sometimes a stuffy nose.
- Day 4: Fever and muscle aches decrease. Hoarse, dry or sore throat, cough and possible mild chest discomfort become more noticeable. You may feel tired or flat.
- Day 8: Symptoms decrease. Cough and tiredness may last one to two weeks or more

If you have flu symptoms, or have been diagnosed with flu, it is important to stay home and avoid contact with others until your symptoms have gone.

WHO IS AT RISK OF SEVERE ILLNESS FROM FLU?

- While anyone can get flu, some people are at higher risk of severe illness (more likely to get very sick from flu, and may be at higher risk of needing hospital care), including:
- Babies and children under 5 years of age
- People aged 65 years and older
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Pregnant women, at any stage of pregnancy
- People with certain medical conditions including heart disease, chronic lung conditions (including severe asthma), kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, obesity, chronic neurological conditions, blood disorders, weakened immune system, and other chronic conditions in children and adults that need regular medical follow up or hospitalisation.



INFLUENZA (FLU)

- If you are homeless or living in an aged care or long-term care facility, you may be at increased risk of severe illness. If you are unsure of your risk, speak to a doctor.

HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING THE FLU?

- Getting a [flu vaccine](#) every year is recommended for everyone aged 6 months or older.
- There are groups of people who are eligible for free flu vaccination each year under the National Immunisation Program.
- [COVID-19 vaccines](#) can be given on the same day as flu vaccine, one after the other.
- Practise good hygiene by covering coughs and sneezes, regularly clean your hands with sanitiser or wash your hands with soap and running water.
- Stay home when sick and if you need to leave home while sick, wear a mask and avoid contact with people at higher risk of severe illness.
- If you are at higher risk of severe illness, talk to your doctor before you get sick to plan for tests and treatment you may need.
- There are antiviral medicines available to prevent and treat flu, discuss with your doctor on what best suits you.

If you experience any of the following symptoms call Triple Zero (000) and tell the ambulance staff that you have flu:

- shortness of breath or rapid breathing
- chest pain or pressure lasting longer than ten minutes
- confusion or sudden dizziness
- persistent vomiting.

If you have flu and have health questions that are not a medical emergency

Contact your doctor or Healthdirect 24/7 for free on 1800 022 222 for fast, expert health advice from registered nurses.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I GET THE FLU?

- Influenza is a notifiable condition in Victoria. The Gippsland Region Public Health Unit (GRPHU) may issue an alert if multiple cases of the flu occur in a short period of time so you can take the necessary precautions.
- You can stay up to date with GRPHU news and alerts by visiting our website

Via QR Code



[Influenza \(flu\) - Better Health Channel](#)