



Each year in the U.S., the flu causes more than 226,000 hospitalizations and about 36,000 deaths.



Common Seasonal Flu Symptoms:

- > Fever (Usually High)
- > Cough
- > Runny Or Stuffy Nose
- > Sore Throat
- > Feeling Tired Or Weak
- > Headache
- > Muscle Or Body Aches
- > Stomach Symptoms
(Mostly In Children)

! A flu shot* is the best way to protect yourself against seasonal influenza (flu).

* Note: Flu vaccine is available as both a shot and a nasal spray.

To learn more about the flu, visit
www.cdc.gov/flu
www.publichealth.va.gov/flu

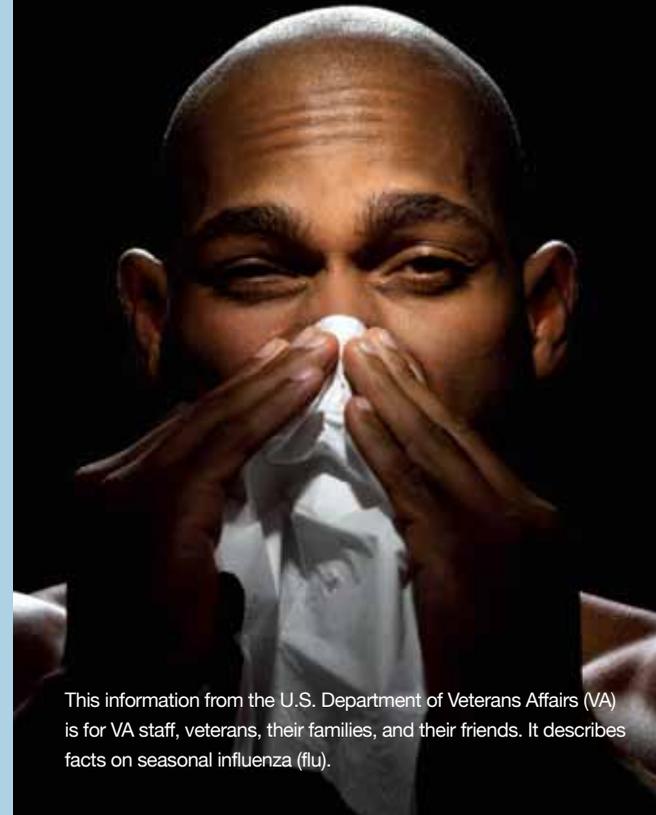


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Seasonal Flu

What You Need to Know



Seasonal flu is a respiratory illness that:

- > Is caused by flu viruses that can change each year
- > Spreads easily
- > Occurs each year during fall, winter, and spring

How does the flu spread?

- > When a person with the flu sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, the flu virus can spread into the air as droplets from their mouth or nose. These droplets can spread to people and surfaces within 3 to 6 feet.
- > The flu virus can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the virus on it. If you then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth, you can get the flu.

This information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is for VA staff, veterans, their families, and their friends. It describes facts on seasonal influenza (flu).

What happens when people get the flu virus?

- > Illness can start 1 to 4 days after exposure
- > Illness from flu can:
 - » Make other health problems worse
 - » Cause pneumonia
 - » Lead to death (mostly in those age 65 and older)
- > People may be able to spread the flu virus to others 1 day **before** they feel sick and up to 5 days **after** getting sick



How is seasonal flu treated?

- > By getting rest
- > By drinking fluids
- > By using fever reducers like Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (e.g., Advil® or Motrin®)**
- > By taking antiviral drugs as Needed (From your healthcare provider)

The flu virus can live on surfaces, such as countertops and door knobs, for 24-48 hours.

How can I protect myself from seasonal flu?

- > Get vaccinated (flu shot or nasal spray) each year in fall or winter
- > Avoid people who are sick
- > Clean hands often
- > Keep hands away from face
- > Cover coughs and sneezes

The best way to stop the flu is to GET A FLU SHOT EACH YEAR

✓ Who **should** get a flu shot?

Anyone who wants to reduce the risk for becoming ill with flu! Especially:

Adults aged 50 and older

Anyone who lives in community living centers with other people (e.g., nursing homes and domiciliaries)

Anyone with ongoing health problems

Children aged 6 months through 18 years

Women who will be pregnant during flu season

Healthcare workers and caregivers, including household contacts

✗ Who **should NOT** get a flu shot?

People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs

People who have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past

People who have had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot

Children aged less than 6 months

People who are sick with a fever (recover before getting a flu shot)

? Can a flu shot give me the flu?

NO. Some people get minor body aches, a headache, or a low-grade fever, but this is **NOT** the flu. If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Most people have none of these symptoms.

There is no live virus in the flu shot so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot.

Almost all people who get the flu shot have no serious problems from it.

** Brand names included in this information are provided as examples only. Their inclusion does not mean that these products are endorsed by VA or any other Government agency. Also, if a particular brand name is not mentioned, this does not mean or imply that the product is unsatisfactory.

