



# Influenza (Flu) The Basics

**Influenza (in-floo-en-zah)**, also called the flu, is a serious, highly contagious viral infection of the nose, throat and lungs. Although colds and other viruses may cause similar symptoms, influenza weakens a person much more than other viruses.

Influenza lowers the body's ability to fight other infections that may develop with influenza putting you at risk for developing pneumonia and other complications.

## **Influenza is very contagious and spreads easily from person to person!**

- When a person with influenza coughs or sneezes, millions of viruses spray into the air.
- If you breathe the virus into your mouth or nose, or you touch objects which have been infected with the virus - like phones, keyboards, and door handles - you can get influenza.
- People with influenza can be contagious for about a day before their symptoms appear, and up to a week afterwards.
- Infected children, adults, and healthcare workers can easily spread influenza to those at risk; anyone over six months of age who wants to avoid spreading influenza should consider getting a flu shot.

## **Symptoms**

If you have influenza, you may have some or all of these symptoms:

- ✓ Sudden fever
- ✓ Sore throat
- ✓ Dry cough
- ✓ Chills
- ✓ Muscle aches
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Extreme weakness and fatigue



Children can also have earaches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Most people are sick in bed for 2-7 days. People may feel weak and tired for up to two weeks; the dry cough can last even longer.

Source: Health Canada, 2008



# Flu Prevention

## *Stay Healthy and Protect Others*

- ✓ Get a flu shot every year.
- ✓ Wash your hands often and properly, especially after being outside, or going to the bathroom. Viruses can live on hard surfaces for up to 2 days, and on hands for up to 5 minutes.

### Proper Hand washing The 6 Step Method:

2. Wet Hands
3. Dispense Soap
4. Lather for at least 20 seconds. It takes 20 seconds to kill all germs.
5. Rinse
6. Towel Dry
7. Turn of tap with towel.

### Cleaning with hand sanitizer:

1. Apply enough product to keep hands moist for 15 seconds.
2. Rub product in palms and thoroughly cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers, including the backs and each thumb.
3. Rub fingertips of each hand in opposite palm
4. Keep rubbing until hands are dry.

*Do not use hand sanitizer with water.*

- ✓ Be physically active, and eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to keep your immune system strong.
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your arm when you cough and sneeze. Influenza is spread from person to person through tiny droplets from the nose and throat. Throw the tissue away immediately.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- ✓ Avoid large, public gatherings if possible.
- ✓ If you have influenza symptoms or feel unwell, stay at home. Do not visit relatives or friends in hospitals or long-term care facilities. Rest and drink plenty of fluids.



Source: Health Canada, 2008



# Be Pro-Active During Flu Season

**EAT RIGHT SLEEP TIGHT:** A poor diet and poor sleep both lower your immunity and make you more vulnerable to infections. A balanced diet that emphasizes fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and small amounts of lean protein works best for most people. On the other hand, the amount of sleep needed for a healthy immune system varies from person to person. In general, adults seem to do best on seven to eight hours of sleep a night. Older children and teens need more rest - between 9 and 10 hours every night.

**EXERCISE REGULARLY:** Regular cardiovascular exercise - walking, biking, aerobics - boosts your immune system. Exercise won't prevent every infection, but if you come down with the flu, you may have less-severe symptoms and recover more quickly than do people who aren't as fit.

**TAKE A SAUNA:** Researchers aren't clear about the exact role saunas play in prevention, but one 1989 German study found that people who steamed twice a week got half as many colds as those who didn't. One theory: When you take a sauna you inhale air hotter than 80 degrees, a temperature too hot for cold and flu viruses to survive.

**LIMIT AIR TRAVEL:** Researchers say that the pronounced drop in air travel that occurred in the fall of 2001 slowed the spread of the flu and delayed the start of flu season by several weeks. Ordinarily, new flu strains spread rapidly in November, during the height of the holiday travel season, so you may be able to reduce your risk by limiting air travel during the late fall.

**DON'T SMOKE:** Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe colds and the flu. Even being around smoke profoundly zaps the immune system. Smoke dries out your nasal passages and paralyzes cilia. These are the delicate hairs that line the mucous membranes in your nose and lungs, and with their wavy movements, sweep cold and flu viruses out of the nasal passages. Experts contend that *one* cigarette can paralyze cilia for as long as 30 to 40 minutes.

**GET FRESH AIR:** A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. Also, during cold weather more people stay indoors, which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.

**IMMUNE BOOSTERS:** Here are some foods that will make both you and your immune system healthier and stronger, so you can fight off infections!

**Yogurt:** Probiotics found in yogurt are good bacteria that can fight the bad bacteria in your gastrointestinal (digestive) tract so you stay healthy. Experts recommend eating  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (175 ml) of yogurt per day.

**Beef, oysters, and beans:** These foods are excellent sources of zinc. Zinc is one of the best immune system boosters out there. It helps white blood cells and other antibodies reproduce more quickly and it makes them more aggressive, so they are better at fighting off infections.

**Carrots** contain beta-carotene, which boosts the immune system's production of infection fighting cells. These cells attack and kill off disease-ridden microbes making you less likely to catch the flu.

**Garlic** has immune-enhancing allium compounds that appear to increase the activity of immune cells that help fight viruses. Try adding fresh garlic to pasta sauce or stir fry to add flavour and immunity power.

Source: WebMD – Oct 29, 2007

# The Flu Shot



# Myths & Facts

<b>MYTH</b>	<b>FACT</b>
<p>I didn't get a flu shot last year and I didn't get sick. Obviously, I don't need a flu shot.</p>	<p>Getting the flu shot every year is recommended because the virus that gives you influenza changes every year. The flu shot vaccine and its ingredients change every year to combat the current virus.</p>
<p>I'm young and healthy. The flu is just a bad cold; I don't need a flu shot.</p>	<p>Influenza is more serious than a cold. Even young healthy adults can become seriously ill. People with influenza are sick in bed for up to five days, causing them to lose time from work or vacation. You might also infect others who are at much higher risk than you - young children, the elderly, or someone with health problems.</p>
<p>Getting a flu shot will give me influenza</p>	<p>This is NOT TRUE. The vaccine does not contain live virus so you cannot get influenza from the flu shot. Many people confuse influenza with a cold or another respiratory infection. The vaccine will not protect you against colds or other respiratory infections. The flu shot only provides protection against influenza.</p>
<p>Flu shots are not worth getting because they are not very effective anyway.</p>	<p>A flu shot is about 70-90% effective in preventing illness in healthy adults. In children, it is about 50-80% effective in preventing influenza and has been shown to reduce severe ear infections in young children by up to 36%. Among the elderly, the vaccine can prevent pneumonia and hospitalization in about 6 out of 10 people. Protection from the flu shot vaccine develops about one to two weeks after the shot, and may last for up to one year. Vaccine effectiveness varies from person to person, depending on their state of health; some individuals who get the flu shot may still get influenza. But, if they do, it is usually a milder case than it would have been without the flu shot.</p>
<p>I don't need another flu shot. I've already been vaccinated.</p>	<p>A flu shot is needed every year. There are many different strains of influenza virus. The strains change yearly and each year a new vaccine is produced that provides protection against the three most common strains predicted for the coming season.</p>

# Natural Remedies and Relief for Cold and Flu



If it's too late to prepare, and you are already suffering from the runny nose, headache and fever from a cold or flu, these recommendations can help you get you back on your feet in no time!

- At the first sign of a cold attack, drink scallion and ginger tea, and lots of liquids.
- Over-the-counter zinc lozenges can help reduce the effects of a flu or cold. Taking up to 50 milligrams of zinc a day may help reduce the symptoms of the common cold.
- Vitamin A—Some experts recommend 25,000 IU four times daily for at least three but not more than five days, provided you weigh at least 120 pounds and do not have a liver problem, during the acute phase of flu or colds.
- Garlic - Garlic has natural antibiotic effects, and some experts suggest ten capsules a day of a high allicin content garlic in the first six hours of cold symptoms. Top scrambled eggs with minced raw garlic. Put chopped raw garlic on pasta and cover with tomato sauce. Try minced raw garlic on a piece of hot buttered toast. Delicious! Add minced raw garlic to your baked potato. Mix chopped raw garlic and olive oil with hot cooked greens like kale or spinach.
- The other highly recommended natural treatment is Vitamin C. The suggested dosage would be 1000 mg every 2 hours, unless diarrhea or gas occurs.
- Echinacea - take the maximum recommended dose when symptoms are acute.
- It is helpful to inhale eucalyptus, oregano, and lavender, which are antibacterial, antiviral, and decongesting.
- Fasting or light eating is sometimes recommended when you have a cold or flu, so as not to detract from the body's healing by having to digest heavy foods. In general, eat as little solid food as possible to avoid burdening the immune system, but drink plenty of warm fluids such as soups, porridges and tea. Don't forget the water!
- Cold and Flu Formulas that contain natural herbs like honeysuckle flower, burdock root, apricot seed, mulberry root and others support healthy immune function, and comfort cold and flu symptoms.
- In Chinese medicine, the abdomen is considered the storehouse of the body's energy. Keeping your abdomen warm and protected from weather extremes has immense immune benefits. A good way to replenish your energy bank is to regularly place a hot water bottle on your abdomen. Also beneficial is applying abdominal wraps soaked in rejuvenating herbal solutions, or pouches containing similar herbs.

*\*\*\*See your doctor prior to any supplementation.*