

## What should I do if I get sick with the flu?

- Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of liquids.
- Ask your health care provider if antiviral medication is necessary.



## Additional Resources

**New Jersey Department of Health**  
[nj.gov/health/cd/topics/flu.shtml](https://nj.gov/health/cd/topics/flu.shtml)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**  
[cdc.gov/flu](https://cdc.gov/flu)

**Follow the New Jersey Department of Health on social media using @NJDeptofHealth on:**  
Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, LinkedIn and YouTube.



**New Jersey Department of Health  
Communicable Disease Service  
Vaccine Preventable Disease Program  
PO Box 369, Trenton, NJ  
609-826-4861**



# Flu Basics

## Tips to stay healthy during flu season



## What should I know about flu pandemics?

- Flu pandemics (global outbreaks) are caused by a new flu virus that affects people from around the world. Most people won't have immunity (protection) from the virus.
- Flu pandemics are rare. There have only been four flu pandemics in the past 100 years – but they were very serious.
- The seasonal flu vaccine probably won't protect you against a flu pandemic. A new vaccine will need to be made, which may take time.
- During a pandemic, be sure to practice healthy habits and take antiviral medications if prescribed by your health care provider.



## What is the flu?

The flu is caused by viruses that infect your nose, throat, and lungs. It is easily spread from person to person when someone with the flu coughs, sneezes, or talks. It is also possible to get the flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

## What are the symptoms?

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea



## Who is at risk for the flu?

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. Some people are at high risk of developing serious complications if they get sick with the flu such as:

- Children under 5 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic health conditions (asthma, diabetes, or weakened immune system)

## Take Three Actions to Fight the Flu

### 1 Get a yearly flu vaccine.

The vaccine is recommended for everyone six months of age and older.

### 2 Practice healthy habits.

Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use your upper sleeve (elbow), wash your hands often, avoid sick people, clean commonly touched objects and surfaces.

### 3 Take antiviral medications if your health care provider prescribes them.

Antiviral medications work best when started within two days of getting sick; however, if started later, they can still lessen the severity of symptoms. Be sure to follow instructions for taking these medications.



## Why should I get vaccinated every year?

- The flu vaccine is reviewed each year, and sometimes updated, to keep up with changing flu viruses.
- Protection provided by the flu vaccine decreases over time, so an annual vaccine is your best defense.

## When should I get the flu vaccine?

You should get the flu vaccine as soon as it is available for the season. After you get the vaccine, it takes about two weeks for your body to develop protection against the flu, so it is best to get the vaccine by the end of October if you can. The flu season can last as late as May. Getting the vaccine later in the season can still protect you.

## When are people contagious?

People can spread the flu up to 24 hours **before** they feel sick and for about a week after symptoms begin. Children might be able to infect others for an even longer time period.

