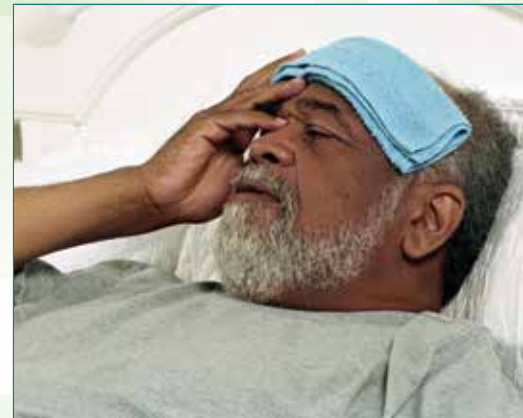
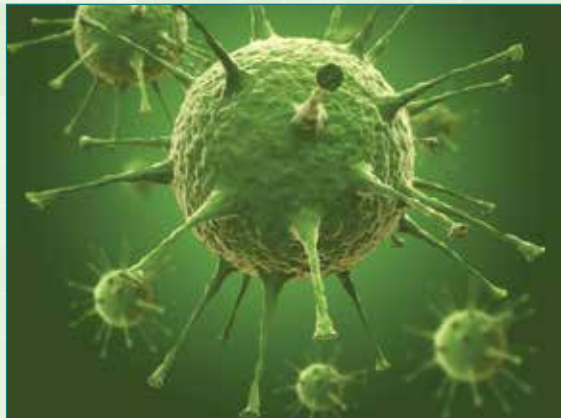


# Seasonal Flu



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

## Seasonal flu

- Is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.
- Spreads easily each year, mainly during fall, winter, and spring.
- Is different from a cold – people with flu usually feel achy and have a fever.

## How flu spreads

- When a person with flu sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, flu virus can spread into the air as droplets.
- The droplets can spread to people and surfaces up to 6 feet away.
- Flu virus can live up to 48 hours on some surfaces.
- 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 might get flu.
- A person can spread flu about 1 day before they feel sick and up to 5 days after getting sick.

## Symptoms

- Fever (100°F or higher)
- Body and muscle aches
- Headache
- Feeling tired or weak (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Stomach symptoms (mostly in children)

## Illness from flu can

- Start 1 to 4 days after exposure
- Make other health problems worse
- Cause pneumonia, hospitalization, and even death

**You cannot get flu  
from a flu shot!  
Flu shots are safe and  
they work!**

## If you have flu

- Call your healthcare team within 48 hours for advice about what to do next.
  - ▶ Antiviral medicines may reduce flu symptoms if started within 48 hours of your first symptoms.
- Stay home and rest.
- Drink fluids.
- Take medicines for fever such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil® or Motrin®).



**Studies show that getting a flu shot can reduce illness and death from flu.**



## Prevention

- Avoid contact with people who have a cold or the flu.
- Clean hands often.
- Keep hands away from your face, eyes, and mouth.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home when sick and limit contact with others.
- Get your flu shot.
  - ▶ VA encourages everyone age 6 months and older to get a flu shot each year as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

*®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.*

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

[www.publichealth.va.gov/flu](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu)

[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

[www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov)



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**VA**



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