What is
Influenza?

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness. It is caused by the influenza virus. The flu can cause mild to severe illness, and can lead to death. Older adults, young children, and people with certain health problems, are at a higher risk for flu complications. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting the flu vaccine every year.

How does the flu spread?

Every time someone coughs, sneezes, or talks, they spray tiny droplets. If they have the flu, these droplets contain the influenza virus. People who are close by may breathe in these droplets or they may land on a nearby surface. If someone touches an object that has the flu virus on it and then touches their own mouth, nose, or their eyes they may contract the flu.

Flu symptoms

People who have the flu often have some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Chills
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches

Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea. This is more common in children.

People at high risk

Certain people are more likely to have complications from the flu, such as:

- Children younger than 2
- People 65 years and older
- Pregnant women
- People with certain health problems, such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and a weakened immune system

What can I do if I have the flu?

- Get plenty of rest
- Keep a distance from others
- Drink lots of fluids
- Take care of your symptoms
- Take any medicine your doctor recommends
- Talk to your doctor if your symptoms worsen

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick with the flu?

- ✓ Yearly flu shot (6 months and older)
- ✓ Practice good habits:
  - Wash your hands with warm water and soap
  - Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve
  - Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth
- ✓ Take any antiviral drugs your doctor prescribes (for high risk patients)

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