

# Seasonal Flu

## What You Need to Know



### Getting a flu shot can:

- Protect you, your family, and your friends from the flu
- Prevent severe illness and even death

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

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.
- 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 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

Who should get a flu shot?

Anyone who wants to reduce their risk for becoming ill with flu! Ask where to get your 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. 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.

**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)

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



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

 Department of Veterans Affairs