



The flu's fingerprints can touch everyone

Imagine if the flu virus left fingerprints you could see

They would be everywhere. On your hands, doorknobs, vending machines, telephones, computer keys and even on this brochure.

The flu can leave its mark everywhere

Picture this: The guy who works next to you has the flu. He doesn't know it. He coughs, covering his mouth. He takes a break. You take a break a little later. You press the same button on the coffee machine. You rub your nose. Now you could have the flu. And you could take it home with you.

Can you afford to have the flu?

Probably not. You have a full life, both at work and at home. When you have the flu, you put that life on "hold" for at least a week, guaranteed — probably longer. You could even end up in the hospital. Who handles your life while you get well?

It's nasty

Getting the flu is serious. It always affects your lungs. It starts suddenly, with a high fever, headache, chills, muscle aches and cough. It stays around up to two weeks. And it can lead to more serious complications like pneumonia. Millions get the flu every year, and thousands die from flu-related causes. The flu doesn't kid around.

You can do something about it

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a shot every year. A flu shot prevents the flu in healthy adults 90 percent of the time. The viruses in the shot are not alive, so you can't get the flu from it. The flu shot takes about two weeks to start working. Flu activity usually peaks in January or later so it's best to get your flu shot during October, November or December.

The shot takes about 15 seconds. The most you'll feel is a tender spot on your arm where the shot was given. Flu shots are usually available at your clinic, at work or at community locations like public health departments, grocery stores, pharmacies and senior centers.

Who needs it? (The flu shot, that is!)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot.

Some people are more likely to have added problems as a result of the flu. It's very important for them to get the shot — the earlier, the better. These people include:

- Children ages 6 months to 18 years (children ages 6 months to 8 years old getting a shot for the first time will need two shots 30 days apart)
- People with lung disease (including asthma), diabetes or heart disease
- Adults 50 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Children and teens who take aspirin on a regular basis
- Nursing home or other long-term care residents
- Health care workers
- Family and day-care providers of infants less than 6 months old
- Anyone who lives with people in these high-risk groups

Women who are breastfeeding can also get flu shots and their babies won't be affected. Protect yourself, your family, your co-workers and your community.

Note: Check with your health care provider if you are allergic to eggs or thimerosal, have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past, have ever had Guillain-Barré syndrome or have a fever over 100 degrees at the time of the shot.

Get the shot. Not the flu.

Quick flu facts

It's not a cold

The flu (also known as influenza) is very different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. Though a cold may linger for a week or two, the symptoms are much less severe. A person can function with a cold, but not with the flu.

Common symptoms

Chills	Cold	Flu
Extreme tiredness	No	Yes
Fever	No	Yes
Body aches	No	100 –104° F
Loss of appetite	No	Yes
Headache	No	Yes
Cough	Yes	Yes
Stuffy nose	Yes	No
Diarrhea/vomiting	No	No
Sore throat	Yes	Yes

It's not the "stomach flu"

Many people think a stomach bug is the flu. It's NOT. A "stomach flu" is an intestinal illness caused by virus, bacteria or food poisoning, and it often goes away after 24 to 48 hours. It doesn't pack the punch of the real flu virus, which goes after your lungs and keeps you down and out for much longer.

How to help prevent the flu

These simple actions can stop the spread of germs and help protect you from getting sick:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands
- Wash your hands often to help protect yourself from germs
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Good habits such as getting plenty of sleep, exercising regularly, managing stress, drinking water and eating nutritious foods will help you stay healthy

Check with your health care provider if you have any of these conditions to learn how to protect yourself from the flu:

- You have a severe egg allergy (eggs are used to make the vaccine)
- You are allergic to thimerosal (used in contact lens solution and other vaccines)
- You have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past
- You have ever had Guillain-Barré syndrome
- You have a fever over 100° F at the time of the shot (wait until you feel better and have no fever)

Questions? Call your doctor or clinic or visit bluelinktpamn.com.

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