



Seasonal Flu

OVERVIEW

The flu (also known as influenza) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent this illness is by getting a flu **vaccination** each fall.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu;
- more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and;
- about 36,000 people die from flu.

Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications.

Seasonal Flu FAQ

What is the difference between the Pandemic Flu, and the yearly seasonal flu?

Seasonal Flu: The Annual Flu occurs every year in NC usually from November through April with the peak in January and Feb. This is the flu most of us have had at least once in our lives. There is a yearly vaccine that is formulated to help build the individual's immune response to the seasonal flu. Typically the yearly flu results in 1,000 deaths each year in NC, mainly in the very old and very young.

Pandemic Flu: Pandemic flu can emerge any time during the year. It results from a new or novel flu virus that becomes easily transmitted from human to human. Because it is new, no one has antibodies (immunity) to this virus and there would not yet be a vaccine. The projected number of deaths for NC would be around 5,600 and not necessarily just the old or young.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

The flu usually starts suddenly and may include:

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| *Fever (usually high) | *Runny or stuffy nose |
| *Headache | *Muscle aches |
| *Extreme tiredness | *Dry cough |
| *Sore throat | *Stomach symptoms, such as |

nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea,
also can occur but are more common
in children than adults

Who should get a flu vaccination (shot)?

Nearly everyone runs the chance of getting sick for the flu virus, so everyone 6 months or older should get vaccinated. For certain populations, however, it is very important that they get vaccinated each year. They are either people who are at high risk of having serious flu complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications. People who should get vaccinated each year are:

1. People at high risk for complications for the flu:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house those with long-term illnesses
- Adults and children 6 months and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma
- Adults and children 6 months and older who needed regular medical care or were in a hospital during the previous year because of a metabolic disease (like diabetes), chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system (including immune system problems caused by medicines or by infection with human immunodeficiency virus [HIV/AIDS])
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- All children 6 to 23 months of age

2. People 50 to 64 years of age. Nearly one-third of people in this age bracket in the United States have one or more medical conditions that place them at increased risk for serious flu complications.

3. People who can transmit flu to others at high risk for complications. Any person in close contact with someone in a high-risk group (see above) should get vaccinated.
This includes all health-care workers, caregivers of children 6 to 23 months of age, and close contacts of people 65 years and older.

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