

# Influenza Quicksheet

August 2023

## Background

Influenza (Flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus that infects the nose, throat, and occasionally the lungs. Flu can cause mild to severe illnesses in humans and at times may lead to death. Seasonal flu (influenza A and B) is detected year-round, but fall and winter is considered flu season.

## Symptoms

Flu symptoms may resemble many other infections circulating during the winter months. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some may have vomiting and diarrhea, although this is more common in children than adults

\*not every flu will have a fever

## How Flu Spreads

Flu spreads via droplets in the air when a person with flu coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets then land on the mouth or nose of people nearby.

Symptoms typically begin two days (range one to four) after the flu virus infects a person's respiratory tract.

## How Contagious is Flu

Flu can be spread one day **before** symptoms began and up to five to seven days **after** becoming sick. Individuals with flu are most contagious in the first three to four days after they developed symptoms. However, infants and individuals with weakened immune systems who are infected with flu may be contagious for longer than seven days.

## Prevention

Get the flu vaccine.

- Flu vaccines help reduce the burden of flu illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths
- Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine, ideally before the end of October

Everyday steps to stop the spread of germs.

- Stay home when sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash hands often
- Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly

Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them

- Antivirals can lessen symptoms and shorten the duration of disease

## When to stay home

If you test positive for flu or have flu-like symptoms, you should isolate at home:

- Isolate at home until you are fever free without the use of fever reducing medication for 24 hours

Common Symptoms	COVID-19	Flu	RSV
Fever and/or chills	✓	✓	✓
Headache	✓	✓	
Muscle pain or body aches	✓	✓	
Feeling tired or weak	✓	✓	
Sore throat	✓	✓	✓
Runny or stuffy nose	✓	✓	✓
Sneezing			✓
Cough	✓	✓	✓
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	✓	✓	✓
Vomiting and diarrhea	✓	✓	
Change in or loss of taste or smell	✓		

Learn more at:  
<https://www.delcopa.gov/health/pages/flu.html>

