

# INFLUENZA

## FACT SHEET

### What is Influenza?

Influenza, commonly called the “flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by Influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death.

### Symptoms of Influenza

The flu usually comes on suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults



### How do People get Influenza?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with Influenza.

Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

### Diagnosis and Treatment of Influenza

Doctors can perform tests to see if you have the flu if you are in the first few days of your illness.

Antiviral drugs are sometimes prescribed by doctors for patients with seasonal flu.

### How Can I Help Prevent the Spread of Influenza?

A yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. To reduce the risk of transmission, you should also:

- Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve when you cough or sneeze. If you must use a tissue, throw it in the trash after you use it and wash your hands as soon as possible.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) can be used when soap and water are not available.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

**For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at the City-County Health Department at 454-6950 or visit [www.cchdmt.org](http://www.cchdmt.org) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**