

NSW Health

About influenza (the flu)

Easy Read version



How to use this guide



NSW Health wrote this guide.

When you read the word 'we', it means NSW Health.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page [23](#).



This is an Easy Read summary of another guide.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the guide on our website.

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/
Pages/influenza_factsheet.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/influenza_factsheet.aspx)



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.

What's in this guide?

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What is influenza (the flu)?



Influenza is a virus that can:

- spread quickly
- make you very sick.



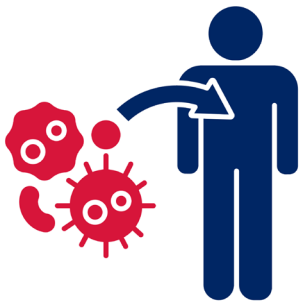
People often call it the flu.



The flu is more serious than a cold.

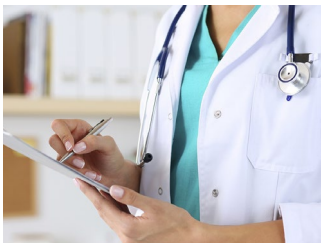


The flu can also lead to other health problems, like an **infection** in your lungs.



When you have an infection, it means germs have gotten into your body.

This can make you very sick.



If the flu leads to other health problems, you might need to go to hospital.

When you catch the flu, you might have:



- a fever



- chills



- pain in your joints and muscles



- a headache.

You might also have a:



- cough



- sore throat



- runny or stuffy nose.



The flu can also make you feel very tired.

Children with the flu might also:



- feel sick in the stomach



- vomit



- get **diarrhoea**.



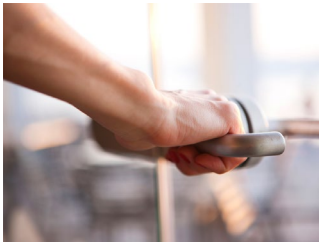
Diarrhoea is when you have to go to the bathroom a lot because your poo is watery and loose.

How does the flu spread?



The flu can spread when people:

- sneeze
- cough.



You can also get the flu if you touch something that someone with the flu has sneezed or coughed on.

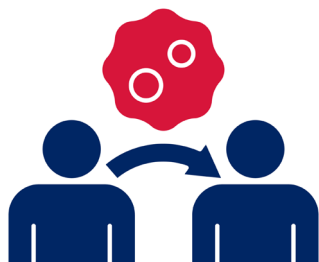
Like a door handle.



The flu is more common in Autumn and Winter.

But you can get the flu any time.

Can you spread the flu?



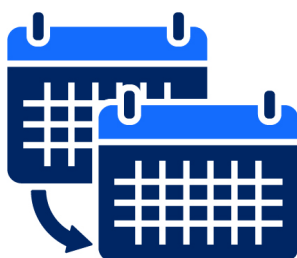
You can spread the flu before you start to feel unwell.



And you are most likely to spread it in the first 5 days of being sick.



Children can spread the flu for up to 10 days.



Some people might spread the flu for longer.

Who is most at risk from the flu?



Anyone can get the flu.

But the flu can be worse for:



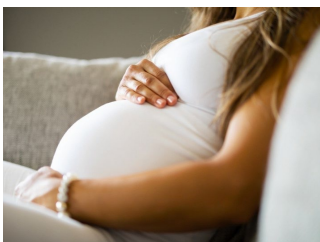
- people younger than 5 years old



- people 65 years and older



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



- pregnant women.

People who have certain health problems can also be more at risk, including people:



- with heart disease

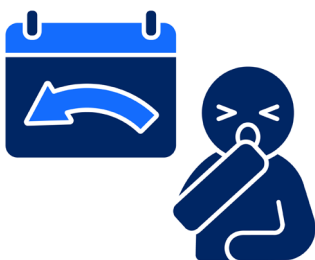


- who can find it hard to breathe.

What if you are at high risk from the flu?



You can talk to your doctor if you are at high risk from the flu.



Your doctor can help you plan what to do before you get sick.



For example, the doctor can help you plan the right medicine to take if you get sick.

How can you stay safe from the flu?

What is a vaccine?



A **vaccine** is medicine that:

- helps you fight a virus if you come into contact with it
- can stop you getting very sick from the virus.



Getting a flu vaccine is a good way to protect yourself from the flu.



It can help you:

- stay healthy
- keep doing the things you love.



People more than 6 months old can get the flu vaccine.



There is a new flu vaccine every year.



Some people can get the vaccine for free if they have a high risk of getting really sick from the flu.

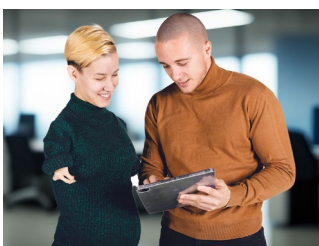
Getting a flu vaccine can help to protect:



- you



- your friends and family



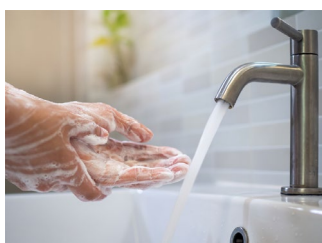
- the people where you work.

What else can you do?

There are simple steps you can take to help protect others, including:



- staying home when you are sick



- washing your hands



- covering your mouth when you sneeze or cough.

You can also:



- meet with people outside

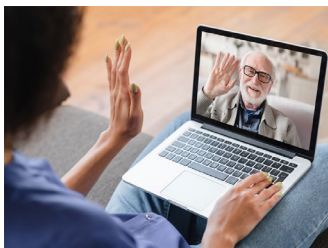


- stay away from crowded places.

If you feel unwell, you should:



- wear a mask if you need to leave home



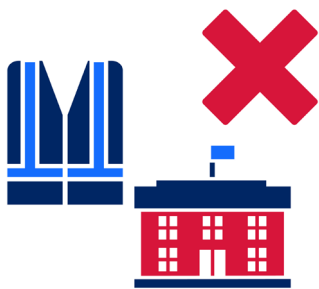
- stay away from people who can get very sick from a cold or the flu, like older people.

What should you do if you get the flu?



If you get the flu, you should try to stay away from other people.

This includes:



- staying home from work or school



- staying away from other people in your home



- staying away from people who can get very sick from the flu, like older people.

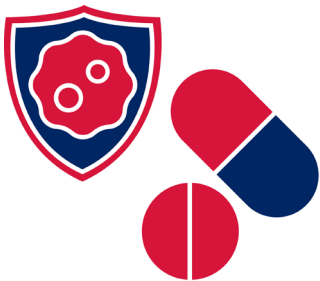


If you think you have the flu, you should contact your doctor as soon as you can.



Your doctor can:

- help you find out if you have the flu
- decide if you can use **antiviral medicine**.



Antiviral medicine is a type of medicine you take to help fight a virus.

It might reduce how long you can spread it to other people.



If you can use antiviral medicine, you should take it in the first 2 days that you feel sick.

How can you get better?

You can help yourself get better by:



- resting



- drinking water.

You can also take:



- paracetamol

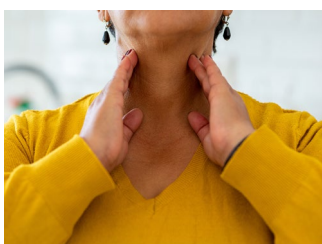
or

- ibuprofen.

These can help if you:



- have a fever



- feel pain.

When to call Triple Zero (000)



You can call Triple Zero and ask for an ambulance.

000

You should call Triple Zero straight away if:



- it is hard to breathe
- you are breathing very fast
- you feel pain in your chest
- you feel confused or dizzy
- you keep vomiting.



You should tell the person on the phone that you might have the flu.

More information



You can call your doctor if you:

- have the flu
- have health questions
- don't need an ambulance.



You can call healthdirect.

healthdirect is a 24-hour helpline.

1800 022 222



You can find out more about the flu on our website.

www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/influenza/pages/default.aspx

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Antiviral medicine

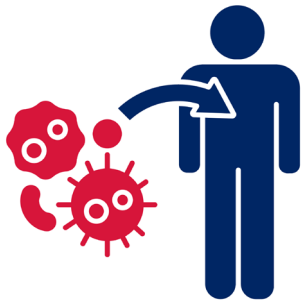
Antiviral medicine is a type of medicine you take to help fight a virus.

It might reduce how long you can spread it to other people.



Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is when you have to go to the bathroom a lot because your poo is watery and loose.



Infection

When you have an infection, it means germs have gotten into your body.

This can make you very sick.



Vaccine

A vaccine is medicine that:

- helps you fight a virus if you come into contact with it
- can stop you getting very sick from the virus.



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