

Flu: When to Get Medical Care

1. What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is an infectious respiratory disease caused by viruses (germs) that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It causes mild to severe illness in people. Flu is usually spread from person to person through droplets that are made when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Sometimes people may be infected by touching something that has the virus on it and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.



2. What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, headaches, extreme tiredness, and muscle aches. Some people might have vomiting and diarrhea, but this is more common in children than adults.

Children younger than 5 years old, especially those younger than 2, and those with chronic illness including asthma are at higher risk for serious illness from flu.

3. When should I seek emergency medical care?

The flu can be very serious for some people. If you or someone you know is feeling ill or experiencing flu-like symptoms, call your doctor or nurse hotline for medical advice. Get emergency medical care as soon as possible for of the following warning signs:

Who	Get medical help if...
Infants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast breathing or trouble breathing • Bluish skin color • Not drinking enough fluids or no tears when crying • Serious or constant vomiting • Not waking up or not interacting in their usual way • Fussier than usual (including not wanting to be held) • Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough • Having far fewer wet diapers than normal
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast breathing or trouble breathing • Bluish skin color • Not drinking enough fluids or no tears when crying • Serious or constant vomiting • Not waking up or not interacting in their usual way • Unable to eat • Very sore muscles
Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard time breathing or shortness of breath • Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach • Sudden dizziness, confusion, or behavior change • Serious or constant vomiting • Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough