



## Influenza

Influenza, commonly called the "flu," is an infection of the respiratory tract caused by the influenza virus. Compared with most other viral respiratory infections such as the common cold, influenza often causes a more severe illness.

Pneumonia is a serious infection or inflammation of your lungs. The air sacs in the lungs fill with pus and other liquid. Oxygen has trouble reaching your blood. If there is too little oxygen in your blood, your body cells can't work properly. Because of this and spreading infection through the body pneumonia can cause death.

Flu and pneumonia combined are the fifth leading cause of death among American women.

### Who's at high risk for influenza?

People with:

- Chronic lung disease such as asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, bronchiectasis, tuberculosis, or cystic fibrosis
- Heart disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Diabetes or another chronic metabolic disorder
- Severe anemia
- Diseases
- Medical treatments that depress immunity

People who are 65 and older and residents of a nursing home or other chronic care facility are also at a high risk.

### Common symptoms

- Fever (up to 104 degrees F)
- Chills (sometimes shaking)
- Muscle aches and pains
- Sweating
- Dry cough
- Nasal congestion
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Malaise
- Fatigue

Some or all of these symptoms may be present.



### **Who should get a flu shot?**

- People 65 years of age and older
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities
- Women who will be more than three months pregnant during the influenza season
- People with chronic diseases of the heart, lung or kidneys, diabetes, immunosuppression, or severe forms of anemia, including children with asthma
- People who provide care to high-risk patients
- Children and teenagers who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and may be at risk of developing Reye Syndrome

### **Sources:**

- ❖ [American Lung Association](#)
- ❖ [National Foundation for Infectious Diseases](#)
- ❖ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Women's Health. "Ten Leading Causes of Death by Age Group." 2000
- ❖ [Centers for Disease Control - Flu fact sheet](#)
- ❖ [Mayo Clinic](#)

*This information is being provided as a source of education and information and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment. The OWH recommends consultation with your doctor or healthcare professional.*