Influenza Facts

“The Flu”

What is the flu?
Influenza, commonly known as “the flu”, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Anyone can get the flu.
Anyone can get flu, even healthy people. Individuals 65 years and older, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and children younger than 5 years are at higher risk of developing serious medical complications from the flu.

The flu spreads from person to person.
• Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby.
• People with the flu are most contagious in the first 3 to 4 days of their illness, sometimes before they develop symptoms.

Symptoms of the flu
• Fever*
• Cough
• Sore Throat
• Runny or stuffy nose
• Body Aches
• Headache
• Chills
• Fatigue
• Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting (more common in children)
*Not everyone will develop a fever.

How is the flu prevented?
The best way to prevent flu virus is by getting a vaccination each year. The vaccine is safe for kids and adults.

The first and most important step in preventing flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization, or even death. CDC also recommends everyday practices like staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and frequent handwashing to help slow the spread of flu.

Is the flu dangerous?
While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. The flu can lead to complications such as bacterial pneumonia, ear & sinus infections, and worsening of some chronic conditions such as heart failure, asthma and diabetes.

Is the flu vaccine safe?
Yes, flu vaccines are made using strict safety and production measures. Millions of people have safely received flu vaccines for decades. Despite common confusion, the vaccine itself does not cause the flu.

How do you treat it?
There are influenza antiviral drugs that can be used to make the flu illness milder.