

Get the Facts, Not the Flu!

inflUenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by inflUenza viruses A and B. It can cause mild to severe cases of fever, body aches, headache, sore throat and coughing, and can even lead to death.

Flu is most widely spread through tiny droplets when people sneeze, talk or cough, but it can also be transferred by touching something that has the flu virus on it and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.



To prevent getting the flu you should get a flu vaccine each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that everyone 6 months or older get a flu vaccine.

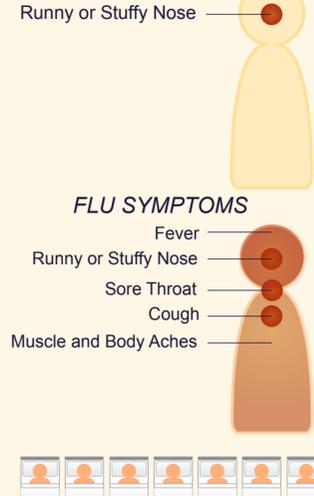
There are many misconceptions about the flu, so it is important for you to know the difference between what is fact and what is fiction.

#1 Fact or Fiction: The flu vaccine can give you the flu.



FICTION – The flu vaccine is made from a dead, inactivated virus, so it can't infect you. People who get sick immediately after receiving the flu vaccine were going to get sick anyway because it takes a week or two for the virus to even work!

You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning **1 day before** symptoms develop and up to **5 to 7 days after** becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

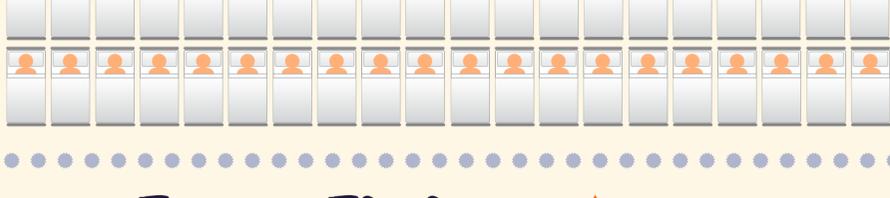


#2 Fact or Fiction: The flu is just a bad cold.

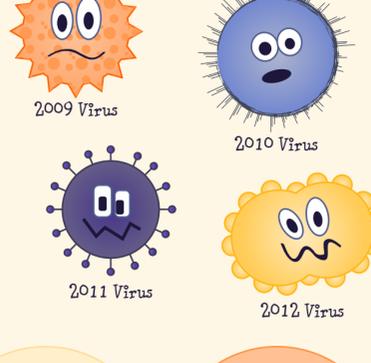
FICTION – The flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. Colds are milder than the flu, and symptoms include a runny or stuffy nose. The flu is more severe and includes symptoms such as intense fever, body aches, tiredness and coughing.

Colds usually don't result in serious health problems, whereas the flu can be life-threatening. The CDC says that **200,000** people are hospitalized because of the flu each year.

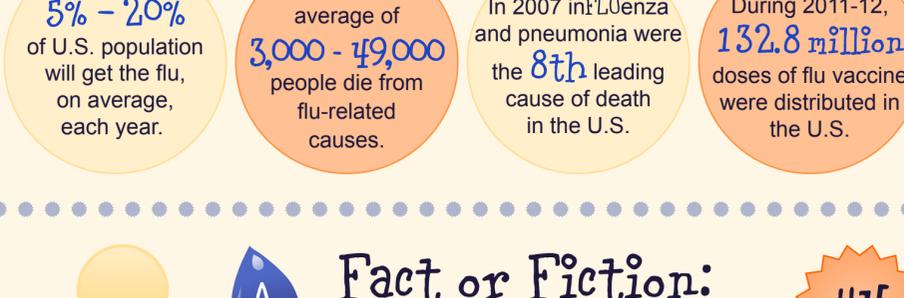
= 5,000 people



#3 Fact or Fiction: You don't need a flu vaccine every year.



FICTION – Every year the inflUenza virus changes and mutates, so it's imperative that you get the latest shot/spray. These vaccines develop antibodies in your body that protect against infection.

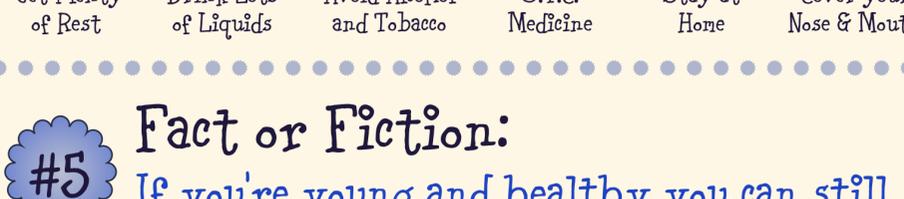


#4 Fact or Fiction: You can get the flu more than once during flu season.

FACT – Since there are 2 types of inflUenza viruses (A & B), you are at risk of getting infected with both, so even if you have already had the flu you should still get the vaccine to prevent against another strain of the virus.

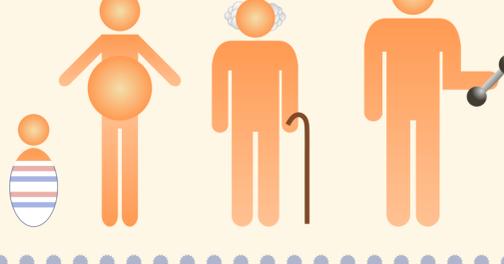
What if I Get the Flu?

If you develop flu-like symptoms, but you do not have an underlying medical condition:



#5 Fact or Fiction: If you're young and healthy you can still get the flu.

FACT – Even though children under 4 years of age, pregnant women and adults 50 and older are at higher risk of getting the flu, people who are in perfect health and show no symptoms can still spread the virus to others.



#6 Fact or Fiction: Antibiotics can help fight the flu.

FICTION – Antibiotics are used to fight bacterial infections, not viruses, so they have no effect of any kind on the flu.

If you get sick, there are drugs that can treat flu illness. They are called antiviral drugs and they can make your illness milder and help you feel better faster. They also can prevent serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia.

#7 Fact or Fiction: You can get swine flu from eating pork products.

FICTION – Swine flu did originate in pigs, but it has moved to humans. Now it can only be transmitted from person to person and not from pig to person, so you can't get it from eating pork.



#8 Fact or Fiction: Taking vitamin C and eating chicken soup will prevent the flu.

FICTION – Although vitamin C and chicken soup are good for you, there is no conclusive proof that either prevents you from getting the flu.

- Prevent the Spread of Germs:**
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities.
 - While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

#9 Fact or Fiction: You can still get the flu even if you use antibacterial soap.

FACT – Antibacterial soap fights against bacteria, not virus, so it can not prevent the flu. However, you can help prevent transmission of the virus by constantly washing your hands. Follow these easy steps:



1. Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
2. Rub hands together to make a lather, and scrub all surfaces. (Avoid placing your hands under the water while you do this, or you will wash the soap away before you're finished scrubbing.)
3. Continue rubbing hands for 15 to 20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" twice through.
4. Rinse hands well under running water.
5. Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the bathroom or restroom door.



#10 Fact or Fiction: Most people get the flu in December.

FICTION – Some people can get the flu as early as October and as late at March.

SOURCES

1. <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/influenza/in-depth-resources/debunking-the-myths.html>
2. <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/features/top-13-flu-myths?page=2>
3. <http://www.health.harvard.edu/flu-resource-center/10-flu-myths.htm>
4. <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/tc/influenza-topic-overview>
5. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm/>