



# RiskMATTERS

## Influenza

Visit Health Canada's website which contains complete information regarding the symptoms, spread, prevention and treatment of influenza—visit today at [hc-sc.gc.ca](http://hc-sc.gc.ca).

Most people experience several bouts of influenza throughout their lifetime. An estimated 10 to 25 per cent of Canadians get the flu each year and thousands are hospitalized as a result of its complications.

### **Influenza**

The flu is an infection of the respiratory tract that is caused by the influenza virus. It is spread mainly through airborne transmission, when an infected person sneezes, coughs or speaks. A person can infect others one day before having flu symptoms and up to five days after becoming ill.

### **Flu Symptoms**

Influenza is most often associated with the sudden onset of fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches, runny or stuffy nose, cough and sore throat. Most people recover within a couple of weeks. Occasionally, complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis or other infections can occur.

### **Prevention**

The flu vaccine is your best chance of preventing the illness. Currently, it is recommended that anyone over 6 months of age receive an annual flu vaccine. In addition, those at high risk for flu complications (young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic conditions and those 65 years or older) are highly recommended to get the vaccine each year.

Other prevention tips include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay away from others when you feel under the weather.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often to protect against germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Get plenty of sleep, stay physically active, manage your stress and eat a nutritious diet to help your body fight off disease.

### **If You Get Sick**

If you get the flu, stay home from work to avoid spreading the illness. The flu is generally manageable with rest and over-the-counter medicine. If your symptoms are severe, your doctor can prescribe antiviral drugs to treat them. However, be sure to seek immediate medical attention if you display any of these warning signs:

- Difficulty breathing
- Pain or pressure in chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough