



# Better Safe!



WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

## Don't Fear the Flu!

*Learn the Facts & Protect Yourself*

Scary stories about the flu are sure to get your attention. A lot of people are worried and confused when new flu viruses spread across the globe.

"Seasonal flus change slightly from year to year," explains Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Once your immune system encounters a virus, it learns to recognize and block it, so it won't make you sick again. Each year, seasonal influenza viruses change a little bit to evade your immune system. This slow "drifting" from year to year can go on for decades.

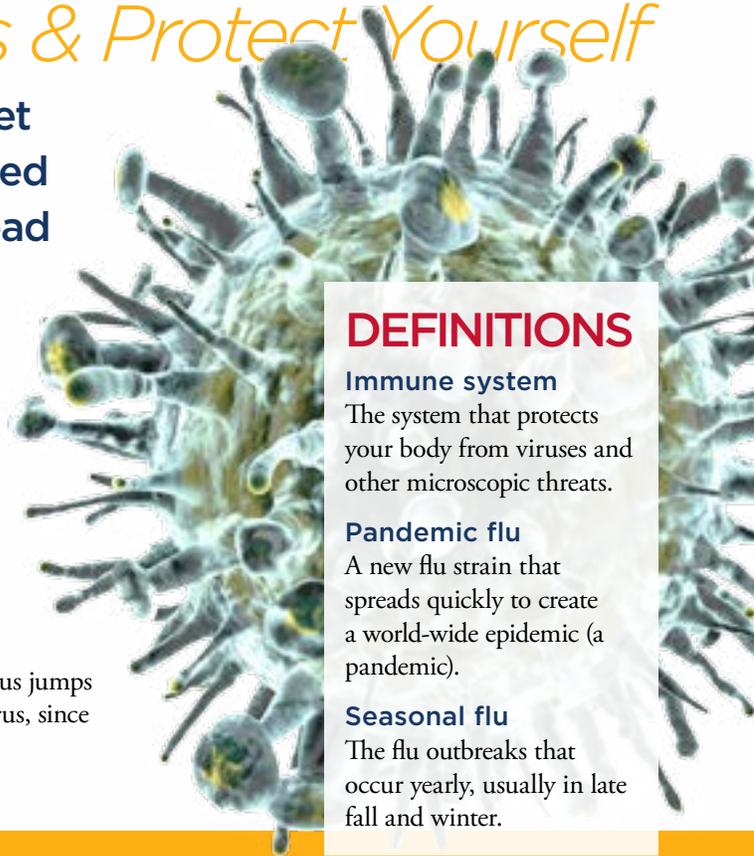
### Understanding Pandemics

Pandemic flu comes rarely—only 3 times in the 20th century. Instead of a little drift, it's caused by a sudden major shift. That can happen when a virus jumps from an animal to humans. Most people have no immunity to the new virus, since our immune systems haven't seen anything like it before.

That's why it's so important for young people to get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best protection against flu. Vaccines contain pieces of viruses to "teach" your immune system to recognize and attack the real viruses as soon as they enter your body.

### How Vaccinations Work

Each year, scientists look at the influenza viruses emerging at the end of the flu season. Then they begin making a vaccine, hoping to match the viruses that will emerge in full force the following fall and winter. "You can predict with accuracy about 85% of the time at the end of a given flu season what you're going to see the next flu season," Fauci says.



### DEFINITIONS

#### Immune system

The system that protects your body from viruses and other microscopic threats.

#### Pandemic flu

A new flu strain that spreads quickly to create a world-wide epidemic (a pandemic).

#### Seasonal flu

The flu outbreaks that occur yearly, usually in late fall and winter.

The flu—or influenza—can always be deadly. Each year, the seasonal flu kills more than 36,000 people nationwide and hospitalizes 200,000.

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ON NEXT PAGE





## Flu Vaccination Q & A

### Who needs to get a flu shot?

According to the CDC, everyone 6 months of age and older should get the flu vaccine.

### When should I get a flu shot?

Get the vaccine as soon as it is available in your area. Flu season usually peaks in January or February, but it can occur as late as May. Early immunization is the most effective, but it is not too late to get the vaccine in December, January, or beyond.

### How long will the vaccination protect me?

The flu vaccine will protect you for one flu season, and is designed to protect you from the strains of flu that are expected to circulate that flu season. Except for some children and older adults, only one dose of vaccine is needed every year.

### Will the vaccine protect me from all types of cold and flu viruses?

Flu vaccines will not protect against infection and illness caused by other viruses that can also cause influenza-like symptoms. There are many other viruses besides influenza that can result in influenza-like illness that spread during the flu season.

### Does the flu vaccine work the same for everyone?

The flu vaccine is the single best way to prevent the flu, and vaccination is the main tool used to protect people from influenza. But, protection is never 100%, and some people can still get the flu after being vaccinated.

If you do get sick, get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids like water and soup broth. Those 5 years of age and older can take medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin) to relieve symptoms. Don't give aspirin to children or teenagers who have the flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

If you have flu, help keep it from spreading. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away after you use it. And don't go to work or school while you're sick. Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100°F or 37.8°C) without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.



### WARNING SIGNS

Get medical care right away if you notice these symptoms:

#### In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

#### In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting