



HealthWorks
Northwest

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Fact Sheet

The Flu

Influenza, or flu is a respiratory infection caused by a variety of flu viruses. The most familiar aspect of the flu is the way it can "knock you off your feet" as it sweeps through entire communities.

The flu differs in several ways from the common cold, a respiratory infection also caused by viruses.

For example, people with colds rarely get fevers or headaches or suffer from the extreme exhaustion that flu viruses cause.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 20 to 26 percent of Americans come down with the flu during **each flu season, which typically lasts from November to March.**

Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu, and children frequently spread the virus to others.

Although most people recover from the illness, CDC estimates that in the United States more than 100,000 people are hospitalized and about 50,000 to 70,000 people die from the flu and its complications every year.

How can I keep from getting the flu?

Get a flu shot.

The main way to keep from getting flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine.

You can get the vaccine at your doctor's office or a local clinic, and in many communities at workplaces, supermarkets, and drugstores. You must get the vaccine every year because it changes.

Scientists make a different vaccine every year because the strains of flu viruses change from year to year. Nine to 10 months before the flu season begins, they prepare a new vaccine made from inactivated (killed) flu viruses.

Because the viruses are killed, they cannot cause infections. The vaccine preparation is based on the strains of the flu viruses that are in circulation at the time.

Sometimes, an unpredicted new strain may appear after the vaccine has been made and distributed to doctors and clinics.

Because of this, even if you do get the flu vaccine, you still may get infected. If you do get infected, however, the disease usually is milder because the vaccine still will give you some protection.

Your immune system takes time to respond to the flu vaccine. Therefore, you should get vaccinated 6 to 8 weeks before flu season begins to prevent getting infected or reduce the severity of flu if you do get it.

The vaccine itself cannot cause the flu, but you could become exposed to the virus by someone else and get infected soon after you are vaccinated.

If you need a flu shot during the flu season just come and see us at 3331 Washington Way in Longview, or call us for more information at 578-2527