



### Ask a Health Care Professional

Influenza (also called the "flu") activity is increasing. Now is the time to get a flu vaccine! Learn about influenza and how you can protect yourself and your family as we ask a Health Care Professional some important questions and get answers about this year's flu season.



#### What is influenza?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness and, at times, can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

Influenza is different from a cold. Influenza usually comes on suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- fever
- headache
- tiredness (can be extreme)
- dry cough
- sore throat
- nasal congestion
- body aches



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#### How do you protect yourself from the flu?

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine each season. It takes about two weeks for the antibodies from the vaccine to develop protection against infection.

In addition to getting vaccinated, Pennsylvanians are encouraged to practice healthy habits like covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, frequently washing your hands during flu season, and remembering to disinfect commonly touched objects, such as door knobs, light switches, countertops, cell phones and computers.

If you do become sick with the flu, it is important to stay home and rest. If you are at risk for developing serious complications from the flu, or feel extremely ill, you should see a medical professional immediately.

To learn more about the flu, visit the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Flu/Pages/Flu.aspx) at:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Flu/Pages/Flu.aspx>

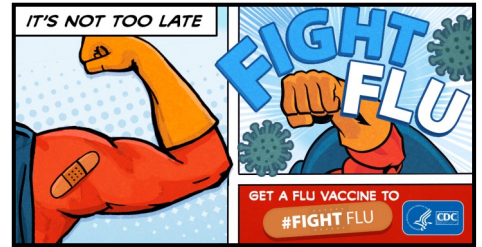
Signs and Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Symptom onset	Gradual	Abrupt
Fever	Rare	Usual
Aches	Slight	Usual
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly common
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Usual
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate	Common
Headache	Rare	Common

#FIGHT FLU

## Ask a Health Care Professional continued

### What three actions can I take to fight the flu season?

1. **Get a flu vaccine.** Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine by the end of October. Getting a flu vaccine every year provides the best protection against flu.
2. **Take everyday actions to stop the spread of germs.** Try to avoid close contact with sick people, and if you become sick, limit your contact with others. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands often.
3. **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.** If you get sick with flu, prescription flu antiviral drugs can be used to treat flu illness. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.

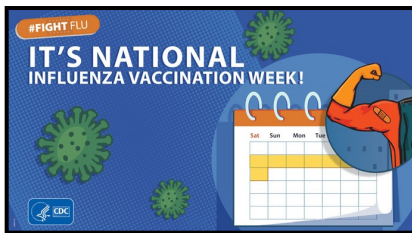


### Where can I get the flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines are available at your doctor's office, pharmacy, local walk-in clinic or grocery store. You can also find the nearest flu vaccine clinic by visiting:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/flu-finder-widget.html>. Simply enter your zip code or city and state to find mapped locations of flu vaccine clinics near you.

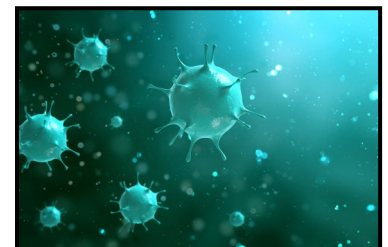
## National Influenza Vaccination Week December 1–7, 2019



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond.

Previous flu vaccination coverage data have shown that few people get vaccinated against influenza after the end of November. The CDC and its partners choose December for NIVW to remind people that even though the holiday season has begun, it is not too late to get a flu vaccine. There are many reasons why it is not too late!

- As long as flu viruses are spreading and causing illness, vaccination should continue throughout flu season in order to protect as many people as possible against flu.
- Vaccination efforts should continue through the holiday season and beyond. It is not too late to vaccinate.
- While vaccination is recommended before the end of October, getting vaccinated later can still be beneficial during most seasons for people who have put it off.
- Even if have already gotten sick with flu, you can still benefit from vaccination since many different flu viruses spread during flu season and most flu vaccine protects against four different flu viruses.



## Know Before You Go—Holiday Travel

### Holiday Travel Safety

Winter weather can occur anywhere and can include freezing rain, ice, snow, high winds or a combination of all these conditions. Since holidays are traditionally a time of travel for families and

many people choose vehicle travel, you should always know the weather before you go.

If you are on the road in winter weather, drive slower than normal and leave room between you and surrounding vehicles when roads are wet, snowy, or icy. DO NOT use cruise control, brake quickly, or take sharp turns.

**WINTER DRIVING KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**

- Check road conditions.** Call 511 or visit your state's DOT webpage to check on road conditions. Choose a different route or adjust your travel plans if road conditions are poor.
- Pack an emergency supply kit.** Stock your vehicle with a mobile phone, charger, batteries, blankets, flashlight, first-aid kit, high-calorie, non-perishable food, candle to melt snow for drinking water, sack of sand or cat litter for traction, shovel, scraper, and battery booster cables.
- Get the weather forecast.** Change your travel plans if hazardous weather is expected.
- Ready your vehicle.** Check your battery, wipers, coolant, and other systems affected by cold temperature. Make sure your tires have good tread. Clear snow, ice or dirt from your windows, lights and camera.

STAY ALERT! Make sure you keep your gas tank over half full and keep a close eye on road conditions, which can change rapidly. On road trips, take breaks often so you can stay focused on the road.

It is important to minimize your travel during a winter storm. Even if winter weather conditions are not obviously present, conditions like black ice can cause vehicles to lose control.

### Sign Up for Alerts... Stay informed. Stay Safe!

Join the [AlertPA](#) notification system by CodeRED for emergency and weather related alerts, health notifications, building alerts, and other updates from commonwealth and federal agencies.

Click here to sign up for:

\*One message per alerting event. Message and data rates may apply.

A CodeRED Weather Warning will automatically alert you if your address falls in the path of severe weather, as determined by the National Weather Service.

**PennDOT's 511PA Smartphone App**

Real-time, hands-free traffic advisories for 40,000 miles of PA roadway, and for major NJ and WV roads.

[511PA](#) can send email to travelers who sign up for Personal Travel Alerts, and lets you tailor your notifications for all roadways on the 511PA core network. It is easy to sign up to tailor your alerts to only those roadways in which you are interested.

Don't want alerts on the weekends? No problem. You can specify that you only want email alerts on weekdays. Only want email alerts before you start your daily commute? Just say what time of day you would like them to start and end.



## PEMA is Social!

*Find Us, Visit Us, Follow Us, Retweet Us!*



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<https://twitter.com/PEMAdirector>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/BeReadyPA>

## PEMA Can Be Found on the Web!

*Be Informed, Be Prepared, and Be Involved!*



[www.ready.pa.gov](http://www.ready.pa.gov)



**pennsylvania**

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

[www.pema.pa.gov](http://www.pema.pa.gov)

### Preparedness Events in December

#### **National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 1 - 7)**

(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/index.htm>)

PLEASE NOTE: In early 2020, the Ready PA monthly newsletter is going digital! To make sure you continue to receive this monthly newsletter, please sign up at:

<https://www.ready.pa.gov/Pages/Subscribe.aspx>

### Additional Resources

**Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency:** [www.pema.pa.gov](http://www.pema.pa.gov)

**Ready PA:** [www.ready.pa.gov](http://www.ready.pa.gov)

**SERVPA:** [www.serv.pa.gov](http://www.serv.pa.gov)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency:** [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**Office of the State Fire Commissioner:** [www.osfc.pa.gov](http://www.osfc.pa.gov)

**Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities:** [www.dobs.pa.gov](http://www.dobs.pa.gov)

**Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources:** [www.dcnr.pa.gov](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov)

**Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Homeland Security:** [www.homelandsecurity.pa.gov](http://www.homelandsecurity.pa.gov)

**Pennsylvania Insurance Department:** [www.insurance.pa.gov](http://www.insurance.pa.gov)

**Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General:** [www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov)

**Pennsylvania State Police:** [www.psp.pa.gov](http://www.psp.pa.gov)

**PA511Connect:** [www.511pa.com](http://www.511pa.com)

# FLU PREVENTION TIPS

**GET VACCINATED** Influenza is the only respiratory virus preventable by vaccination.

**KEEP HANDS CLEAN**  
Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer often.

**STAY HOME** If you become ill, stay at home and avoid contact with others until your fever is gone for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

**COVER YOUR MOUTH AND NOSE**

Always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after use and clean your hands.

Up to  
**20%**  
of the U.S.  
will get the flu.

**EXERCISE** It boosts your immune system and speeds recovery from illness.

**DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE**  
This is the easiest way for germs to get into your body.

**EAT HEALTHY** Eating healthy, balanced meals can strengthen your immune system.

**SMILE** Studies show that smiling can help boost your immune system.

# GET YOUR FLU SHOT

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