



A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study suggested that, on average, about 8% of the U.S. population gets sick from the flu each season. In preparation for the 2020-21 flu season, learn more about the flu and how you can prevent it.

About Influenza

Influenza, which is commonly known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. Flu season typically begins in October, peaks between December and February, and can last through May.

The flu is different than a cold, as it usually comes on suddenly. It's also important to note that COVID-19 and the flu may present similar symptoms. As such, testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

The flu can cause mild to severe illness. People who contract the flu may feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue

In some cases, particularly in children, vomiting and diarrhea can also be a symptom of the flu.

Prevalence of the Flu

The flu is so common that the number of people infected each season can only be estimated. However, it is more prevalent in certain age groups. One Clinical Infectious Diseases study broke down the infection rate across age groups as follows:

- Children ages 0 to 17 years - 9.3%

- Adults ages 18 to 64 years - 8.8%
- Adults ages 65 and older - 3.9%

How can the flu be treated?

Antiviral drugs can lessen symptoms and shorten the time you are sick, as well as prevent serious flu complications like pneumonia. The CDC recommends prompt treatment for people who have or are suspected to have the flu. This is especially important for those who have a high risk of serious flu complications, including:

- Young children
- Adults of 65 years or older
- Pregnant women
- People with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease

How can the flu be prevented?

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated every year. This year, due to COVID-19, it's more important than ever. The CDC recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months receive their annual flu vaccine.

To keep yourself safe, you should also:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water often, or use an alcohol-based sanitizer when soap and water aren't available.

For more information about the flu, contact your doctor today.