

Following are answers to questions commonly asked by school administrators, teachers, staff, and parents:

General Information about the Disease

What is influenza (flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. CDC estimates that flu-related hospitalizations since 2010 ranged from 140,000 to 710,000, while flu-related deaths are estimated to have ranged from 12,000 to 56,000.

Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications (https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm) and are more likely to have serious flu outcomes. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.

How does the flu spread?

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of flu include:

- fever (usually high)
- headache
- extreme tiredness
- dry cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches

- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults

Although the term “stomach flu” is sometimes used to describe vomiting, nausea, or diarrhea, these illnesses are caused by certain other viruses, bacteria, or possibly parasites, and are rarely related to influenza. Also see Cold Versus Flu(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/coldflu.htm>).

How long is a person with flu virus contagious?

The period when an infected person is contagious depends on the age and health of the person. You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

The flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Because these two types of illnesses have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. Colds are usually milder than the flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations.

How can you tell the difference between a cold and the flu?

Because colds and flu share many symptoms, it can be difficult (or even impossible) to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Special tests that usually must be done within the first few days of illness can be carried out, when needed to tell if a person has the flu.

More information about Flu: The Disease(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>).

Preventing and Treating the Flu

What can I do to protect myself against the flu?

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/index.htm>) as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the main flu viruses that research indicates will cause the

most illness during the flu season. (Three or four viruses, depending on which vaccine you get.) The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus. See Vaccine Benefits(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm#benefits>) for more information.

If you do get the flu, antiviral drugs(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm>) are an important treatment option. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This could be especially important for people at high risk. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). Visit Treatment - Antiviral Drugs (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm>) for more information.

In addition, you should take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs, like flu. This includes staying away from sick people, frequent hand washing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, especially if someone is ill, to decrease your chances of getting or spreading the flu. If you are sick with flu, reduce your contact with others and cover your cough to help keep germs from spreading. See Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>) for more information.

What kind of flu vaccines are there?

CDC recommends use of injectable influenza vaccines (including inactivated influenza vaccines and recombinant influenza vaccines) during 2016-2017. The nasal spray flu vaccine (live attenuated influenza vaccine or LAIV) should not be used during 2016-2017.

Both trivalent (three-component) and quadrivalent (four-component) flu vaccines will be available.

Trivalent flu vaccines include:

- Standard-dose trivalent shots (IIV3) that are manufactured using virus grown in eggs. Different flu shots are approved for different age groups. Most flu shots are given in the arm (muscle) with a needle. One trivalent vaccine formulation can be given with a jet injector, for persons aged 18 through 64 years.
- A high-dose trivalent shot, approved for people 65 and older.
- A recombinant trivalent shot that is egg-free, approved for people 18 years and older.

- A trivalent flu shot made with adjuvant (an ingredient of a vaccine that helps create a stronger immune response in the patient's body), approved for people 65 years of age and older (new this season).

Quadrivalent flu vaccines include:

- Quadrivalent flu shots approved for use in different age groups.
- An intradermal quadrivalent flu shot, which is injected into the skin instead of the muscle and uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot. It is approved for people 18 through 64 years of age.
- A quadrivalent flu shot containing virus grown in cell culture, which is approved for people 4 years of age and older (new this season).

How do flu vaccines work?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body. These antibodies provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the main influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

At what age should a child be vaccinated?

CDC recommends that everyone aged 6 months and older get a flu vaccine. Children younger than 6 months are too young to get vaccinated. It's especially important that their contacts be vaccinated to protect them from possible exposure to the flu.

Some children 6 months through 8 years of age getting a flu vaccine for the first time may need two doses of vaccine the first year they are vaccinated. If possible, the first dose should be given as soon as vaccine becomes available. The second dose should be given 28 or more days after the first dose. The first dose "primes" the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. Children who only get one dose but who need two doses can have reduced or no protection from a single dose of flu vaccine. Your child's doctor or other health care professional can tell you if your child needs two doses.

See Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>) for more information.

What kinds of flu vaccines are available for children?

Influenza vaccine options for the 2016-2017 season are listed in "TABLE. Influenza vaccines — United States, 2016–17 influenza season(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/vaccines.htm>). Different products are approved for different age groups, including children as young as 6 months of age.

Note that while there is a quadrivalent nasal spray vaccine that is FDA approved for the U.S. market, ACIP and CDC recommend that nasal spray vaccine not be used during the 2016-2017 season because of concerns about how well it works.

Your child's health care provider will know which vaccines are right for your child.

- **CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine.**

Keep in mind that vaccination is especially important for certain people who are high risk or who are in close contact with high risk persons. This includes children at high risk (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm#high-risk-children>) for developing complications from influenza illness, and adults who are close contacts of those children.

For the complete list of those at high risk, visit People at High Risk of Developing Flu–Related Complications(https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm).

What are influenza antiviral drugs?

Influenza antiviral drugs(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm>) are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They also may also prevent serious flu complications. This could be especially important for people at high risk (https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm).

How are antiviral medications used for flu?

While getting a flu vaccine each year is the best way to protect you from the flu, antiviral drugs (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm>) can be used as a second line of defense to treat the flu or to prevent flu infection. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). When used this way, these drugs can reduce the severity of flu symptoms and shorten the time you are sick by 1 or 2 days. They also may prevent serious flu complications.

Flu Resources for Schools

Where can I get more information about the flu?

For more information and updates about the flu, you can call CDC's hotline or visit CDC's Web site.

You can call the **CDC Flu Information Hotline** (English and Spanish) at:

- 800-CDC-INFO(<https://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/index.html>) (800-232-4636)
- 888-232-6348 (TTY)

You can visit CDC's flu Web site(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>) where you can access the following:

- Information about preventing the spread of flu in schools;
- "Cover Your Cough(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>)" posters formatted for printing;
- "It's a SNAP" toolkit, which includes activities that school administrators, teachers; and students and others can do to help stop the spread of germs in schools.

Find contact information for your state or local health department (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html>).

See Key Facts about Seasonal Flu(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>), a fact sheet including information about flu symptoms, how flu spreads, and how to prevent flu.

See The Flu: A Guide for Parents[1.76 MB, 2 pages] (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/a-flu-guide-for-parents.pdf>) , and Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine(<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>) for information on how to protect your child, treatment, and more.

For more information about the flu shot, visit Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>).

How To Clean and Disinfect Schools To Help Slow the Spread of Flu

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases in schools. To help slow the spread of influenza (flu), the first line of defense is getting vaccinated. Other measures include staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands often. Below are tips on how to slow the spread of flu specifically through cleaning and disinfecting.

1. Know the difference between cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing

Cleaning removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Sanitizing lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level, as judged by public health standards or requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the risk of spreading infection.

2. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched often

Follow your school's standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting. Typically, this means daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones, and toys. Some schools may also require daily disinfecting these items. Standard procedures often call for disinfecting specific areas of the school, like bathrooms.

Immediately clean surfaces and objects that are visibly soiled. If surfaces or objects are soiled with body fluids or blood, use gloves and other standard precautions to avoid coming into contact with the fluid. Remove the spill, and then clean and disinfect the surface.

3. Simply do routine cleaning and disinfecting

It is important to match your cleaning and disinfecting activities to the types of germs you want to remove or kill. Most studies have shown that the flu virus can live and potentially infect a person for up to 48 hours after being deposited on a surface. However, it is not necessary to close schools to clean or disinfect every surface in the building to slow the spread of flu. Also, if students and staff are dismissed because the school cannot function normally (e.g., high absenteeism during a flu outbreak), it is not necessary to do extra cleaning and disinfecting.

Flu viruses are relatively fragile, so standard cleaning and disinfecting practices are sufficient to remove or kill them. Special cleaning and disinfecting processes, including wiping down walls and ceilings, frequently using room air deodorizers, and fumigating, are not necessary or recommended. These processes can irritate eyes, noses, throats, and skin; aggravate asthma; and cause other serious side effects.

4. Clean and disinfect correctly

Always follow label directions on cleaning products and disinfectants. Wash surfaces with a general household cleaner to remove germs. Rinse with water, and follow with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs. Read the label to make sure it states that EPA has approved the product for effectiveness against influenza A virus.

If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. Be sure to read the label directions carefully, as there may be a

separate procedure for using the product as a cleaner or as a disinfectant. Disinfection usually requires the product to remain on the surface for a certain period of time (e.g., letting it stand for 3 to 5 minutes).

Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones and computers. Pay close attention to the directions for using disinfecting wipes. It may be necessary to use more than one wipe to keep the surface wet for the stated length of contact time. Make sure that the electronics can withstand the use of liquids for cleaning and disinfecting.

5. Use products safely

Pay close attention to hazard warnings and directions on product labels. Cleaning products and disinfectants often call for the use of gloves or eye protection. For example, gloves should always be worn to protect your hands when working with bleach solutions.

Do not mix cleaners and disinfectants unless the labels indicate it is safe to do so. Combining certain products (such as chlorine bleach and ammonia cleaners) can result in serious injury or death.

Ensure that custodial staff, teachers, and others who use cleaners and disinfectants read and understand all instruction labels and understand safe and appropriate use. This might require that instructional materials and training be provided in other languages.

6. Handle waste properly

Follow your school's standard procedures for handling waste, which may include wearing gloves. Place no-touch waste baskets where they are easy to use. Throw disposable items used to clean surfaces and items in the trash immediately after use. Avoid touching used tissues and other waste when emptying waste baskets. Wash your hands with soap and water after emptying waste baskets and touching used tissues and similar waste.

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fyi...probably putting this on our website as well.

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