

# INFLUENZA

**\*\*Reportable to local or state health department\*\***

Influenza (also known as “the flu”) is a very common respiratory disease. Influenza is not what is commonly referred to as “the stomach flu,” which is a term used by some to describe illnesses causing vomiting or diarrhea. Every year, millions of people in the United States get influenza. Influenza often results in more severe illness than other respiratory viruses.

## CAUSE

Influenza virus. The two main types of influenza viruses are type A and type B. Within each type there are many related strains or subtypes, which can change every year. This is the reason a person can get influenza more than once and why a person should get vaccinated every year. Influenza usually occurs in the United States between November and April.

## SYMPTOMS

Starts quickly with fever, chills, body aches, headache, cough, runny or stuffy nose, and sore throat. Illness usually lasts 3 to 7 days. Children may develop ear infections, pneumonia, or croup as a result of influenza infection. Serious complications of influenza occur most often in the elderly, young infants or people with chronic health problems or weakened immune systems.

## SPREAD

When a person with influenza coughs or sneezes, tiny droplets containing the influenza virus are released into the air, and another person breathes them in. By touching the secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected person and by touching hands, tissues, or other items soiled with these secretions and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

## INCUBATION

It takes 1 to 4 days, usually 2, from the time of infection until symptoms begin.

## CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Most contagious during the 24 hours before the symptoms begin (very young children may be contagious even earlier). After the symptoms start, children can be contagious up to 7 days and adults are generally contagious for 5 days.

## EXCLUSION

Childcare and School: Until fever and/or vomiting are gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and the child is well enough to participate in routine activities.

## DIAGNOSIS

Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has a high fever and/or persistent cough. Viral cultures may be taken.

## TREATMENT

Antiviral medications (antivirals) can shorten the course of illness if given within 36 to 48 hours after the symptoms begin. Influenza is a viral illness; therefore, antibiotics will not be effective.

***DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN or SALICYLATE-CONTAINING MEDICATIONS TO ANY CHILD OR ADOLESCENT UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE.***

## PREVENTION/ CONTROL

- Annual influenza vaccinations are recommended for:
  - All children 6 months to 18 years of age.
  - All adults 50 years and older.
  - Anyone 6 months of age and older with chronic health conditions.
  - People who care for children less than 5 years of age (especially for children under 6 months of age).
  - Healthcare providers

In addition, flu vaccine can be given to anyone else who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza. The vaccine is usually given in the late fall. People who were not vaccinated in the fall may be vaccinated any time during the influenza season. For current Nevada recommendations, visit [influencenevada.org](http://influencenevada.org).

- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth or handling used tissues. Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces (doorknobs, refrigerator handle, water faucets, cupboard handles) at least daily.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.
- DO NOT allow sharing of anything that goes into the mouth such as drinking cups, straws, water bottles, eating utensils.
- Stay home if you are ill. Encourage parents/guardians to keep ill children at home.

**For more information, please contact your local health department.**

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-887-2190  
(24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

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