

What Causes the Flu?

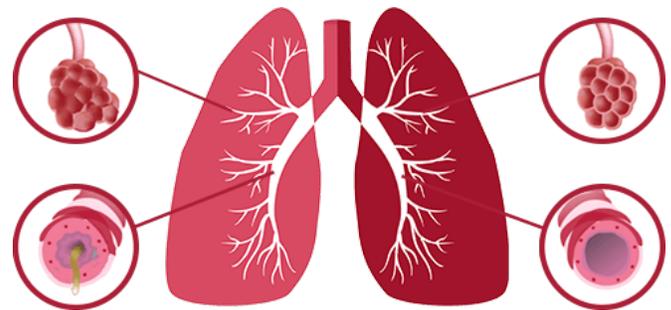
The flu is caused by the influenza viruses that can infect the nose, throat, and lungs. These viruses, like other viruses, spread when people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk sending droplets with the virus into the air, potentially infecting others nearby. You can also get the flu by touching something that has the flu virus on it and then touching your own mouth, eyes, or nose.

Why does the flu spread so quickly?

You can spread the flu before you know you are sick, beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days **after** becoming sick. Young children and people with weakened immune systems are often contagious for an even longer time and can infect others beyond the 5 to 7 days.

Why is the flu high risk for those with COPD?

People with COPD are at high risk of developing serious complications from the flu, even if their COPD is mild or their symptoms are controlled by medication. This is due to the fact that those with COPD have swollen and sensitive airways. Flu can also lead to secondary infections such as bronchitis, sinus infection, ear infections and pneumonia. The flu can also turn very serious very quickly, requiring hospitalization. In some cases, the flu can even result in death.



COPD Lungs vs. Healthy Lungs

Flu Signs and Symptoms

- Sudden onset of high fever, chills
- Headache, muscle aches and joint pain
- Cough, sore throat
- Nasal congestion, runny nose
- Fatigue

What can I do to avoid getting the flu?

- **Get your yearly flu shot.** Everyone 6 months and older should receive a flu shot as soon as it is available every fall.
- Wash your hands often during the flu season.
- Cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surface such as doorknobs.
- Ask those you live with or see frequently to get the flu shot as well.
- Avoid being around people who are sick.

What should I do if I think I have the flu?

- Call our office for an appointment as soon as possible, as there is medication that can help shorten flu symptoms, but it must be taken within two days of symptoms to be effective.
- Continue to take your medications as prescribed. Do not increase or change how you are taking your medications, unless directed by your provider.