



Prevent • Promote • Protect

Communicable Disease & Tuberculosis

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Influenza (flu) Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is influenza?

A: Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times lead to death.

Q: How many cases of influenza have been reported in El Paso County and Colorado?

Influenza Hospitalized Cases & Pediatric Deaths

	El Paso County Hospitalized Cases	Colorado Hospitalized Cases	Colorado Pediatric Deaths
2019-20	469	3,546	3
2018-19	464	3,832	3
2017-18	489	4,650	1
2016-17	361	3,340	2
2015-16	187	1,639	1
2014-15	340	3,397	6
2013-14	212	1,759	0
2012-13	161	1,530	5
2011-12	4	84	0
2010-11	123	1,027	3
2009-10	*188	*2,041	69

*2009 H1N1 Pandemic April 2009-August 2010

Q: When will flu activity begin and when will it peak?

A: The timing of flu is very unpredictable and can vary from season to season. Flu activity most commonly peaks in the U.S. in January or February. However, seasonal flu activity can begin as early as October and continue to occur as late as May.

Q: Can I have flu and COVID-19 at the same time?

A: Yes. It is possible to have flu, as well as other respiratory illnesses, and COVID-19 at the same time. Health experts are still studying how common this can be. Some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, making it hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Diagnostic testing can help determine if you are sick with flu or COVID-19.

Q: Who gets influenza?

A: Anyone can get influenza. Most healthy individuals will have a mild illness. People who are
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at a higher risk for more serious symptoms are children younger than 5 years old; pregnant women; adults older than 65 years old; people who have medical conditions such as asthma, chronic lung disease, heart disease, kidney disease, blood disorders and diabetes; and people with weakened immune systems.

Q: What are the symptoms of influenza?

A: The symptoms of influenza can include fever, cough, body aches, headaches, tiredness and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

Q: How severe will influenza be this year?

A: The unpredictable nature of influenza makes it challenging to determine the severity of the upcoming season. It is expected that influenza and COVID-19 will be co-circulating in communities this season, however, there has been limited influenza virus circulation in the southern hemisphere, likely due to mask-wearing, social distancing and other strategies currently in use to prevent COVID-19 transmission. It should be anticipated that influenza guidance will change over time based on the transmission of influenza and COVID-19.

Q: How is influenza spread?

A: Influenza is spread through droplets when someone is coughing or sneezing, or it can be spread through physical contact with an infected person — such as shaking hands with an infected person and then touching one’s eyes, nose or mouth. It is possible to spread flu 24 hours before symptoms occur. Flu can also be contagious five to seven days after someone is sick. It is very important to practice good hand and cough hygiene.

Q: Will wearing a cloth face covering reduce the spread of influenza?

A: Influenza and COVID-19 spread in similar ways. Medical experts think that the widespread, proper use of cloth face coverings may reduce the spread of influenza, just as proper use of face coverings reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Q: How is influenza diagnosed?

A: Influenza can be diagnosed by a physician through a positive test for the influenza virus.

Q: What is the treatment for influenza?

A: For most healthy individuals anti-viral treatment is not necessary and people will recover on their own. For those who are at high risk for complications there are anti-viral medications, effective if taken in the early stages of illness.

Q: Is there a vaccine for influenza?



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A: There is a vaccine for influenza, and it is the best prevention. Public Health recommends everyone 6 months of age and older be vaccinated.

Q: What can be done to prevent the spread of influenza?

A: The most effective prevention for influenza is vaccination. Additionally, other preventive measures for reducing the spread of COVID-19 are effective at combatting influenza as well:

- If you are sick with the flu, stay home until 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Wash hands frequently. Proper handwashing can prevent the spread of germs from an infected person.
- Cover your cough and sneezes.

For more information visit www.elpasocountyhealth.org.