

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
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
2008-09**	95	530	7
2007-08	154	1,004	2

*2009 H1N1 Pandemic April 2009-August 2010

**2008-09 Season ended May 2, 2009, 4 weeks earlier than normal due to appearance of 2009 H1N1 virus.

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: Who gets influenza?

A: Anyone can get influenza. Most healthy individuals will have a mild illness. People who are 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, diabetes and people with weakened immune systems.

Q: What are the symptoms of influenza?

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

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: 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?

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.

- 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.