

HEALTH HUB

OCTOBER 2026



STAYING HEALTHY DURING THE COLD & FLU SEASON



Fall into Good Health

As the seasons change and cooler weather settles in, so does cold and flu season. A few simple habits can go a long way toward keeping you and those around you healthy. Flu season in the U.S. generally occurs during the fall and winter months. While flu viruses can circulate throughout the year, activity typically peaks between December and February.

Each year, influenza causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. The impact can vary significantly from one season to the next, which is why taking everyday steps to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses is important. It's also important to remember that flu isn't the only illness that spreads during this time of year. Colds, COVID-19, RSV, and other respiratory viruses can cause similar symptoms.

Cold vs. Flu: What's the difference?

A cold and the flu can cause many of the same symptoms, making it difficult to tell them apart. Both are contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. In general, cold symptoms tend to be milder, while flu symptoms often come on more suddenly and can be more intense (Figure 1). Keep in mind: Symptoms can overlap, so you can't always tell the difference based on symptoms alone. Testing alone can help determine whether someone has influenza.



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Common flu symptoms include:

- Fever or feeling feverish
- Chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache
- Muscle or body aches
- Feeling very tired or weak
- Vomiting or diarrhea, which are more common in children

Some people may experience several symptoms at once, while others may have only a few. It's important to know that not everyone with the flu will have a fever. If you're feeling unwell, paying attention to how quickly your symptoms develop and how severe they are can help you decide whether you need to contact a healthcare provider.

Who is most at risk for serious Flu complications?

Anyone can get the flu, including people who are otherwise healthy. However, some people are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill or developing complications if they get the flu.

Figure 1. Is it a Cold or Flu. CDC, 2024.

Signs and Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Symptom onset	Gradual	Abrupt
Fever	Rare	Usual
Aches	Slight	Usual
Chills	Uncommon	Fairly common
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Usual
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate	Common
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Headache	Rare	Common

People at higher risk include:

- Adults 65 and older.
- Young children, especially those under 2 years
- Pregnant people.
- People with certain long-term health conditions, including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic lung disease.
- People with weakened immune systems.
- People with certain neurologic, kidney, liver, blood, or metabolic conditions.
- People living in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities.
- People with certain disabilities that make it difficult to breathe, cough, swallow, or clear mucus from their airways.

If you or someone in your household falls into one of these higher-risk groups, prevention is especially important. Talk with a healthcare provider about vaccination and what to do if flu symptoms develop.



Children and the Flu

Children, especially those younger than 5, and those under 2 in particular, are more likely to develop serious complications from the flu. Children with conditions such as asthma or diabetes may also be at higher risk. Because babies younger than 6 months are too young to receive a flu vaccine, vaccinating parents, caregivers, and other household members can provide an additional layer of protection.

Help children learn healthy habits before flu season gets into full swing. Talk with kids about handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when they're sick, and other ways to help prevent the spread of germs. Looking for a fun way to get started? Check out the CDC's [Ready Wrigley Prepares for Flu Season](#) activity book for kid-friendly activities and tips for the whole family.

Flu Vaccine

Getting a flu vaccine is one of the most important steps you can take to protect yourself from the flu and its potentially serious complications. Flu vaccines are updated each season to help protect against the influenza viruses expected to circulate. Even when someone who has been vaccinated gets the flu, vaccination can help reduce symptom severity.



Where can I get a flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines are available through many healthcare providers, pharmacies, and local health departments. Employees and their families can take advantage of the following upcoming flu clinics:

October 7 | 7:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

- Viridian Event Center
- 8030 S 1825 W

October 8 | 7:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

- Government Center, South Building
- 2001 S State St

Missed the Flu clinics?

If you are unable to attend one of these flu clinics, you can schedule an appointment with your nearest Health Department by calling 385-468-SHOT (385-468-7468).

You can also view available Health Department locations online: [Salt Lake County Health Department Locations](#).

You can also receive your flu vaccine at the Healthy Me Clinic by scheduling your appointment with the [app](#).

When is the best time to get vaccinated?

For most people, September or October is a good time to get your annual flu shot. However, if you aren't able to get vaccinated during those months, it's still beneficial to get vaccinated later in the season. Flu viruses can continue circulating for months, so getting vaccinated later in the season is still better than going without a flu vaccine.

What about adults 65 and older?

People age 65 and older are at greater risk of developing serious complications from the flu. Certain flu vaccines are preferred for this age group, so older adults should discuss their options with their healthcare provider.

Flu Vaccine questions, answered

CDC epidemiologist Michelle Hughes addresses three common questions about flu vaccine safety, pregnancy, and whether the vaccine can cause the flu.





Everyday Ways to Prevent Flu and Other Respiratory Illnesses

Wash your hands

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Cover coughs and sneezes

Use a tissue or your elbow to cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Avoid close contact when you're sick

If someone around you is sick, give them space when possible. If you're sick, try to limit close contact with others.

Avoid touching your face

Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

Improve indoor air

Respiratory viruses can spread more easily indoors, particularly in crowded spaces with little to no airflow. Opening windows, using air filters, or spending time outdoors can help improve air circulation.

Get enough sleep

Aim for enough quality sleep each night. Getting adequate sleep supports your overall health and helps your body function at its best.

Take care of your overall health

Stay active, drink plenty of fluids, manage stress, and eat nutritious foods to support your overall health.

Clean and disinfect surfaces

Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, keyboards, and phones, to help reduce the spread of germs.

Consider wearing a mask

Wearing a well-fitting mask in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces can help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses, especially when illness levels are high or you or someone around you is at higher risk.

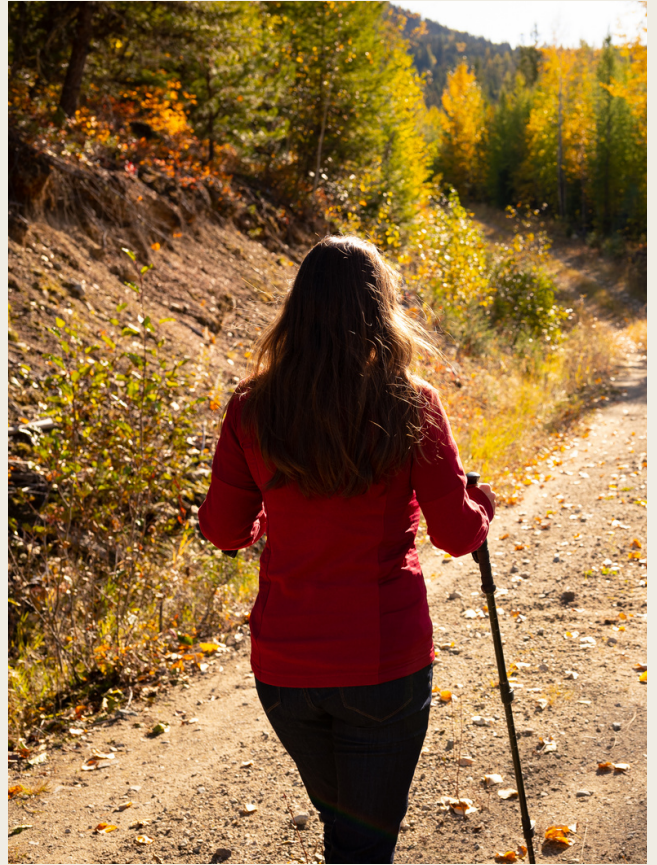
What to do if you get sick

If you've ever had the flu, you know how quickly it can knock you off your feet. The aches, fatigue, cough, and chills can make even everyday activities feel like a lot of work. While prevention is important, it's still possible to get sick. If you do, give your body time to recover by getting plenty of rest and drinking enough fluids.

It's also important to limit contact with others while you're sick. Staying home and giving yourself time to recover can help you feel better while also protecting the people around you from getting sick.

If you are at higher risk for serious flu complications, contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible after symptoms begin. Your provider may recommend a medication to help make flu symptoms milder and lower the risk of serious complications.

It can be tempting to jump back into your usual routine as soon as you start feeling a little better. However, giving yourself enough time to recover can also help protect those around you. The CDC recommends returning to normal activities when your symptoms are improving overall, and you have been free of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medication.



When should you seek medical care?

Most people recover from the flu without serious problems, but it can sometimes lead to complications such as pneumonia or worsen an existing health condition.

Seek medical attention as soon as possible if symptoms are severe, getting worse, or improve and then return. Adults should seek urgent care for warning signs such as trouble breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, confusion, severe weakness, seizures, or signs of dehydration.

For children, concerning symptoms can include difficulty breathing, blue or gray coloring of the lips or face, chest pain, severe muscle pain, dehydration, seizures, unusual difficulty waking or interacting, or symptoms that improve and then become worse.

These are not the only reasons to seek care. If you're concerned about your symptoms or they seem unusually severe, contact a healthcare professional.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal healthcare provider — for personal health-related questions
- Salt Lake County Immunizations Clinic — for local immunization services
- Utah Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Communicable Diseases — for Utah communicable disease information
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — for national influenza and vaccine information
- Utah 211: Dial 211 — for local health and community resources



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