

### What is National Influenza Week?

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each year.

December 3-9 is National Influenza Vaccination Week. If you haven't gotten your flu vaccine yet, now's the time! An annual flu vaccine is the best way to prevent this serious illness. A yearly flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Vaccination is especially important for protecting those at high risk for serious flu complications, including:

- Young children
- Pregnant women
- Adults 65 years and older
- Anyone with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease

### Signs and symptoms

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms, which usually start suddenly:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Vomiting and diarrhea

*\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

### What are the benefits of the flu vaccine?

- Flu vaccination can keep you from getting sick from flu. Protecting yourself from flu also protects the people around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness.
- It also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.
- It can reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalizations.
- It is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions.
- Vaccination helps protect women during pregnancy, and their babies for up to 6 months after they are born.

### Mobile apps

- [Flu Defender](#)
- [Everyday Health Flu Map](#)

### Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Mark Epstein, MD**, NMHC's Chief Medical Officer. The flu virus is spread from person to person in droplets that fly out when you cough or sneeze. Germs are also passed along when you touch mucus droplets from someone else on a surface like a desk and then touch your own eyes, mouth, or nose before you get a chance to wash your hands. Below are some ways to avoid catching and spreading the flu virus:

1. Keep your distance.
2. Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.
3. Wash your hands multiple times a day.
4. Avoid touching your face.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, pharmacies, and college health centers. Visit our [provider directory](#) to find an in-network provider or pharmacy!

### Additional resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [New Mexico Department of Health Influenza Surveillance Program](#)
- [WebMD: Flu Prevention](#)