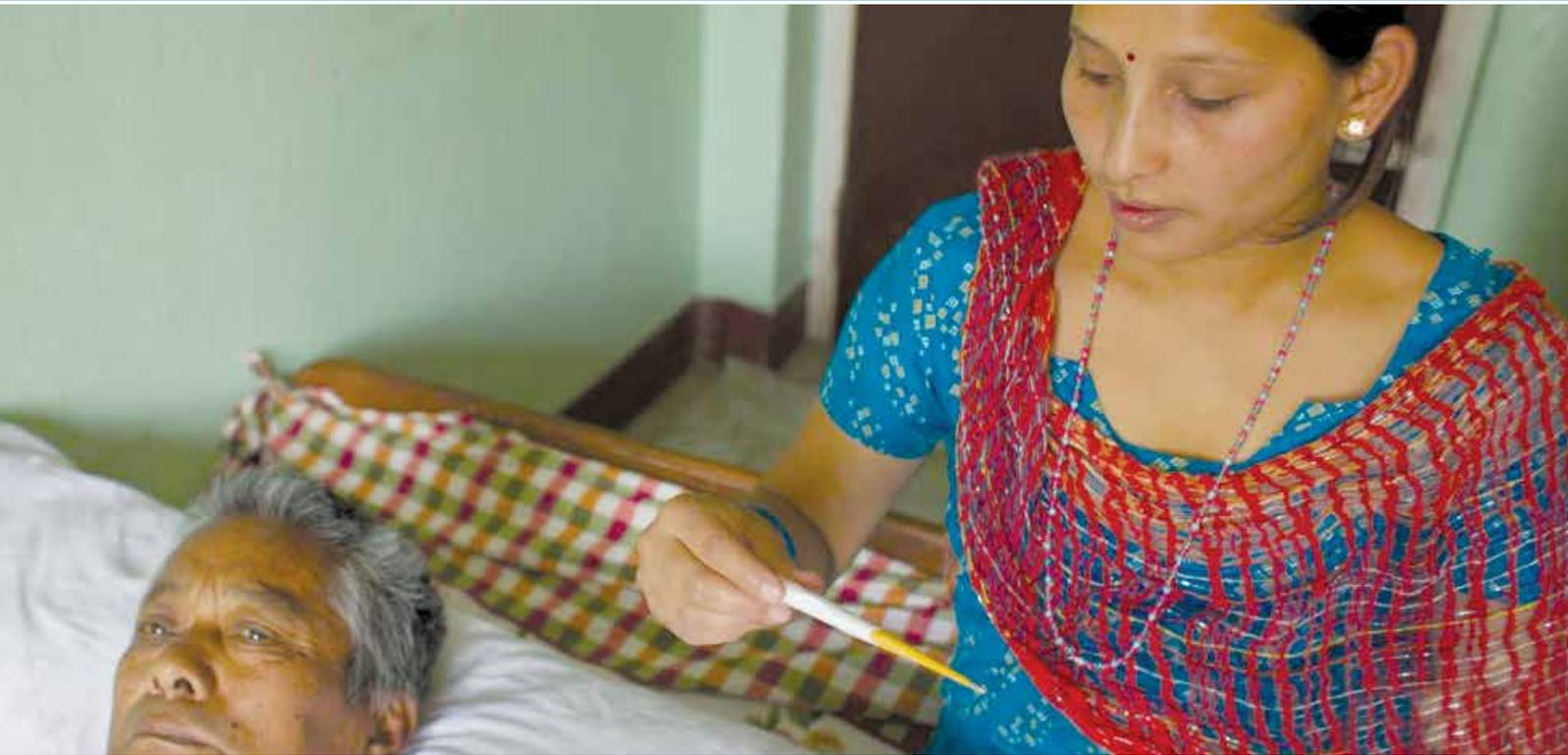


# FLU FACTS

JANUARY 2019



- Seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses which circulate in all parts of the world.
- There are 4 types of seasonal influenza viruses, types A, B, C and D. Influenza A and B viruses circulate and cause seasonal epidemics of disease.
- Currently circulating in humans are subtype A (H1N1) and A (H3N2) influenza viruses.
- The A (H1N1) is also written as A (H1N1) pdm09 as it caused the pandemic in 2009 and subsequently replaced the seasonal influenza A(H1N1) virus which had circulated prior to 2009.
- This is still often referred by many people as 'swine flu', although the word is a misnomer.
- Due to the constant evolving nature of influenza viruses, WHO continuously monitors the influenza viruses circulating in humans and updates the composition of influenza vaccines twice a year. The best way to avoid getting the flu is to get the flu vaccine every year as these viruses evolve constantly.
- Many states in India are presently also seeing an increase in seasonal influenza infections, and WHO is monitoring the disease emergence.
- It is advisable to know influenza facts and be aware of the steps you can take to protect yourself and others in the family/workplace.

## Recognizing flu like illnesses

Flu like illnesses present as a sudden onset of fever, cough (usually dry), headache, muscle and joint pain, severe malaise (feeling unwell), sore throat and a runny nose.

The cough can be severe and can last up to 2 or more weeks. Most people recover from fever and other symptoms within a week without requiring medical attention.

Flu like illnesses can range from mild to severe and even death. Hospitalization and death occur mainly among high risk groups.

## Those at higher risk of influenza complications include:

- Pregnant women
- Persons aged 65 years or older
- Children between 6 months and 5 years of age
- Patients with chronic medical conditions (lung diseases, heart disease, liver disease, kidney disease, blood disorders, diabetes, neurological disorders, cancer, long term immunosuppressive therapy, and HIV/AIDS)
- People who live with or care for those at high risk, including health care workers

## Influenza Transmission

When an infected person coughs or sneezes, droplets containing viruses are dispersed into the air and can spread up to one meter, and infect persons in close proximity who breathe these droplets in.

The virus can also be spread by hands and surfaces contaminated with influenza viruses.

The time from infection to illness, known as the incubation period, is about 2 days, but ranges from one to four days.

The period of communicability--From 1 day before to 7 days after the onset of symptoms.

To prevent transmission, people should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing, and wash their hands regularly.

# How to recognize the flu?



Sudden high fever



Headache



Cough or  
sore throat



Muscle pain

## Preventing Influenza

The most effective way to prevent the disease is to take influenza vaccination.

Safe and effective vaccines are available and have been used for more than 60 years. Injected inactivated influenza vaccines are most commonly used throughout the world.

Immunity from vaccination wanes over time so annual vaccination is recommended to protect against influenza.

Influenza viruses evolve constantly, and twice a year WHO makes recommendations to update the vaccine compositions. WHO recommends annual vaccination for high risk groups including health care workers.

Influenza vaccine is most effective when circulating viruses are well-matched with viruses contained in vaccines. You can get influenza infection even though you may have taken the vaccine.



**Efficacy of vaccine may  
be about 70% to 80%**

Efficacy of vaccine may be about 70% to 80%, and helps prevent severe complications of influenza.

People should ideally get vaccinated just before the influenza season begins for the most effective coverage, although getting vaccinated at any time during the influenza season can still help prevent flu infections.

Available vaccine takes about 2-3 weeks for development of immunity vaccine.

## Getting a flu vaccine each year is the best way to prevent the flu

Vaccination is especially important for those at high risk of influenza complication:



- 1 pregnant women
- 2 people above 65 years of age
- 3 children between 6 months and 5 years of age
- 4 people with chronic medical conditions and people who live with or care for those at high risk

## **Apart from vaccination and antiviral treatment, the public health management includes personal protective measures like:**

- Regular hand washing with proper drying of the hands
- Good respiratory hygiene – covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using tissues and disposing of them correctly
- Early self-isolation of those feeling unwell, feverish and having other symptoms of influenza
- Avoiding close contact with sick people
- Avoiding touching one's eyes, nose or mouth

## **Social distancing**

- Avoid crowded places/gatherings.
- Stay away (more than an arm's length) from an infected person
- Avoid shaking hands /using contact greetings
- Stay at home if not well
- Follow **Home care guideline** of the Ministry of Health, Government of India

## **If someone in the family/staff member is sick with influenza like illness**

- Report the illness/Stay at home for 7 days
- Check temperature twice daily and wear mask (3 layered surgical masks). Avoid having visitors.
- Maintain strict personal hygiene. Wash your hands often with soap and water, and cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze. Avoid shaking hands.
- Only one person should be providing care to a sick family member. Caregiver should wear masks, and monitor their own health.
- Limit contact with others in the home as much as possible. Maintain distance of 1 metre/3 feet with other family members.
- Continue to monitor your illness, if you have mild cough, low fever. Take paracetamol, and fluids, nutritious diet (soups etc.), and plenty of rest.
- Not everyone needs to be tested for seasonal influenza.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you have high fever (more than 39°C or 102°F) and/or severe cough.
- Follow your doctor's advice for completing full treatment.
- For further details from Ministry of Health, Government of India on when to seek care, refer <https://mohfw.gov.in/sites/default/files/53177698911447149562.pdf>

## **Treatment of seasonal Influenza**

- People with the mild flu should drink plenty of water and rest. Most people will recover within a week.
- Take paracetamol for fever; for sore throat--short course of decongestants, saline nasal drops, throat lozenges and steam inhalation may be beneficial.
- Confine yourself at home, and avoid mixing with public and high risk members in the family.
- Smokers should avoid smoking.
- Check with your doctor, if you feel unwell, run high fever or cough gets worse. She/he may prescribe you an antiviral drug.
- Antiviral drugs for influenza can reduce severe complications and deaths although influenza viruses can develop resistance to the drugs. They are especially important for high-risk groups.
- Ideally these drugs need to be administered early (within 48 hours of onset of symptoms).
- The attending physician can assess the need to be treated with antiviral (eg.Oseltamivir).
- Refer Risk categorization.

# What to do when you have the flu?



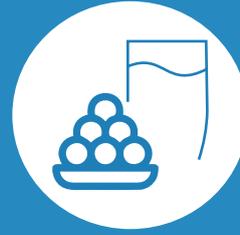
Cover your cough or sneeze with your arm/elbow or tissue



Wash your hands frequently



Get plenty of rest



Drink plenty of water and eat nutritious food



Seek medical advice if you are not getting better or if you are in a high risk group

- Antibiotics are not effective against influenza viruses.
- Refer **Detailed guidance from MoHFW on Home care**
- Know and recognize early warning signs for hospitalization.

## Early warning signs for Hospitalization

These signs/ symptoms needs to be identified early for immediate start of treatment and hospitalization. Most of the adverse outcomes occur because of late reporting of the cases to hospital.

### The early warning signs in adults are:

- High grade fever not responding to antipyretics
- Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness and confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

### The early warning signs in children are:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- High fever with rash

Refer Ministry of Health, guidance on seasonal influenza – Testing, treatment, hospitalization

[https://mohfw.gov.in/sites/default/files/394697031477913837\\_1.pdf](https://mohfw.gov.in/sites/default/files/394697031477913837_1.pdf)

## Infection Control

- The infection control to be followed including frequent hand wash, cough etiquettes, maintaining arm's length distance from others
- Masks, tissue papers should be disposed of in dustbins. Hands should be washed after handling these wastes
- Utensils used by the patient should not be used by others without washing.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling linens and towels used by the patient