

## **What is influenza (also called flu)?**

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

## **Signs and symptoms of flu**

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

## **Take everyday actions to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses.**

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.

**Remember to get vaccinated against the flu. It's your best protection against getting sick. For more info visit [www.mass.gov/dph/flu](http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu)**