

## Get the Influenza (Flu) Vaccine

- Children younger than six months old are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for or live with young babies should be vaccinated to protect them.
2. Simple actions to help prevent the spread of germs that lead to respiratory illnesses.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
  - 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.
  - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
  - Stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading flu to others.
3. Take flu antiviral drugs if prescribed by your doctor.
- If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can treat your illness. These drugs may make your illness milder and shorten its duration.
  - Antiviral drugs work best for people who are very sick when started within the first two days of symptoms (such as those who are hospitalized) or for people who are sick with flu symptoms and who are at increased risk of severe flu illness.

### Is the flu vaccine effective?

Yes, the flu vaccine is very effective.

It takes about two weeks for the vaccine to give you protection against the flu virus.

A few people may still get the flu even if they received the flu vaccine, but they will have milder symptoms.

The flu vaccine only protects you from the flu virus, NOT from the cold virus or other viruses.

### Are there any side effects to the vaccine?

The flu shot is very safe. Very few people experience side effects from the flu shot, the most common being a sore arm.

For more information contact  
Dr. Abdullatif Al-Khal,  
Head of Infectious Diseases

☎ 4439-3273  
@ aalkhal@hmc.org.qa

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# PROTECT

- Yourself
- Your Family
- Your Co-Workers
- Your Community

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### What is Flu (Influenza)?

Flu is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death.

### Flu symptoms can include

- Fever\*
- Headache
- Coughing
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Runny or blocked nose
- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Body aches

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

### How does flu spread?

Most experts believe that flu viruses are most commonly spread by droplets produced when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or can be inhaled into the lungs. A person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it and then touching their own eyes, mouth or nose.

### For how long is someone with flu able to pass on the virus to others?

People suffering from flu can pass the virus on from one day before their symptoms appear to up to seven days after getting sick. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems. This means that flu

sufferers may even pass on the virus to someone before they themselves know they are sick.

### How severe are the symptoms associated with flu?

Each year, different flu viruses spread and affect people in different ways based on each individual's ability to fight infection. Even healthy children and adults can become very ill from the flu and spread the virus to friends, co-workers, and family. In the United States, thousands of seemingly healthy adults and children have to visit the doctor or are hospitalized from flu complications each year.

Flu can make anyone sick, but certain people are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill, possibly resulting in hospitalization or death. This includes older people, young children, people with long term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease and women who are pregnant. (Refer to "What should I do if I get sick?" for the full list of people at high risk.)

### If I become sick, how long should I stay home?

In general, doctors recommend that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Note that your fever should be gone naturally, without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep your distance from others as much as possible to prevent others getting sick. Always cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and wash hands even after you return to work. It is important to know that even if you don't have a fever, you may have flu and be contagious if you get flu symptoms.

### Are there any medicines available to treat flu?

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu in your body. While a flu vaccine is the first and most important step in preventing flu, antiviral drugs are a second line of defense to treat the flu if you get sick. Antiviral drugs are not sold over-the-counter; you must have a prescription to get them. Antiviral drugs are not a substitute for vaccination.

### What can I do to protect myself from getting sick from flu?

Health experts recommend a three-step approach to fighting the flu: vaccination, everyday preventive actions, and the correct use of antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

#### 1. A flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.

- While there are lots of different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the three viruses that research indicates will be most common.
- Flu vaccines protect against three influenza viruses; an H1N1, an H3N2, and an influenza B virus.
- Everyone six months of age and older should get vaccinated against the flu each year.
- Vaccination of people considered to be at high risk is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness. Additionally, vaccination is important for healthcare workers, and those who live with or care for high risk people, in order to prevent them spreading flu to high risk people.