

# Influenza

## Public Health Brief

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## All About Influenza

Influenza, commonly referred to as “the flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. There are two main types of flu virus: Types A and B. Influenza A and B are the viruses that spread in humans and are responsible for flu epidemics each year. The flu can cause mild to severe illness, leading to hospitalization or even death. Those at greater risk for experiencing flu complications include older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions.

### Symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Fatigue

## Stop the Spread

Preventing the spread of the flu can help more people stay healthy throughout flu season. Those following actions help stop the spread of the flu:

- **Get vaccinated.** It’s important for people who can get the flu vaccine to do so to reduce the spread of the virus and protect those who cannot be vaccinated.
- **Ask your doctor about antivirals for the flu.** Antiviral medications can shorten the duration or severity of infection for those newly infected with the flu.
- **Practice prevention.** Prevention activities include avoiding close contact with sick people, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, covering your coughs and sneezes, and washing your hands often.

**Sources:**  
1. CDC. About Influenza. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>; 2. CDC. Prevent Influenza. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html>; 3. Maryland Department of Health. 2018 - 2019 Influenza Report. ; 4. CDC. U.S. Weekly Surveillance Report. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm#ILIActivityMap>

## THE FLU IN NUMBERS 2018-19

# of flu vaccines given by HCHD, 2019*	7,172
% of U.S. population given vaccine	49%
# of influenza hospitalizations in Maryland	3,274
# of estimated cases in the United States	35.5 million

\*Harford County Health Department. HCPS Flu Vaccinations. Clinical Health Data. 2019.

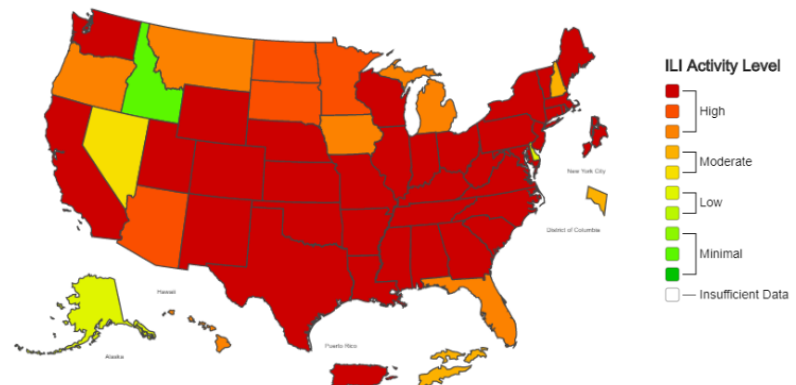
## The Flu Vaccine

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting the flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body. It takes approximately two weeks for antibodies to develop and for immunity to take effect. Each year’s seasonal flu vaccine protects against the most common influenza viruses in the upcoming flu season. Flu viruses are constantly changing, so yearly vaccination is needed for the best protection.

### Facts about the flu vaccine:

- **Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine each year, with rare exception**
- **There are several types of flu vaccine available every year**
- **It’s best to get the flu vaccine by the end of October**
- **You cannot get the flu from the flu shot**

2019-20 Influenza Season Week 5 | Feb 01, 2020



The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitors confirmed influenza cases, hospitalizations, and outbreaks throughout the United States. The Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) Activity Level Indicator is updated weekly.