

October 2019 Health Newsletter



Influenza (also known as flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Flu is different from a cold, and usually comes on suddenly. Each year flu viruses cause millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospital stays and thousands or tens of thousands of deaths in the United States.

Flu can be very dangerous for children. CDC estimates that between 6,000 and 26,000 children younger than 5 years have been hospitalized each year in the United States because of influenza. The flu vaccine is safe and helps protect children from flu.

What parents should know

How serious is flu?

While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. Children younger than 5 years and children of any age with certain long-term health problems are at high risk of flu complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections. Some health problems that are known to make children more vulnerable to flu include asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system.

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly by droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. A person also can get flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

What are flu symptoms?

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Some people with the flu will not have a fever.



Protect your child

How can I protect my child from flu?

The first and best way to protect against flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine for yourself and your child.

- Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older every year. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for vaccination.
- It's especially important that young children and children with certain long-term health problems get vaccinated.
- Caregivers of children at high risk of flu complications should get a flu vaccine. (Babies younger than 6 months are at high risk for serious flu complications, but too young to get a flu vaccine.)
- Pregnant women should get a flu vaccine to protect themselves and their baby from flu. Research shows that flu vaccination protects the baby from flu for several months after birth.
- Flu viruses are constantly changing and so flu vaccines are updated often to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the upcoming flu season.

Is flu vaccine safe?

Flu vaccines are made using strict safety and production measures. Millions of people have safely received flu vaccines for decades. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for vaccination. Different types of flu vaccines are licensed for different ages. Each person should get one that is appropriate for their age. CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend an annual flu vaccine for all children 6 months and older.

What are the benefits of getting a flu vaccine?

- A flu vaccine can keep you and your child from getting sick. When vaccine viruses and circulating viruses are matched, flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of getting sick with flu by about half.
- Flu vaccines can keep your child from being hospitalized from flu. One recent study showed that flu vaccine reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admission by 74%.

- **Flu vaccine can prevent your child from dying from flu.**
A study using data from recent flu seasons found that flu vaccine reduced the risk of flu-associated death by half among children with high risk medical conditions and by nearly two-thirds among children without medical conditions.
- **Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.**
- **Getting yourself and your child vaccinated also can protect others** who may be more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older people, and people with certain long-term health problems.

What are some other ways I can protect my child against flu?

In addition to getting a flu vaccine, you and your child should take everyday actions to help prevent the spread of germs.

Stay away from people who are sick as much as possible to keep from getting sick yourself. If you or your child are sick, avoid others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. Also, remember to regularly cover your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and clean surfaces that may be contaminated with flu viruses. These everyday actions can help reduce your chances of getting sick and prevent the spread of germs to others if you are sick. However, a yearly flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu illness.

If your child is sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.

If your child is 5 years or older and does not have a long-term health problems and gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed.

Children younger than 5 years of age – especially those younger than 2 years – and children with certain long-term health problems (including asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system), are at high risk of serious flu complications. Call your doctor or take your child to the doctor right away if they develop flu symptoms.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even healthy children can get very sick from flu. If your child is experiencing the following emergency warning signs, you should go to the emergency room:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color

- Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or not making as much urine as they normally do)
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with rash



Is there a medicine to treat flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can shorten your illness and make it milder, and they can prevent serious complications that could result in a hospital stay. Antivirals work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. Antiviral drugs are recommended to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example, people who are in the hospital) or people who are at high risk of serious flu complications who get flu symptoms. Antivirals can be given to children and pregnant women.

How long can a sick person spread flu to others?

People with flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to up to 5 to 7 days after. Severely ill people or young children may be able to spread the flu longer, especially if they still have symptoms.

Can my child go to school, day care, or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid spreading flu to other children or caregivers.

When can my child go back to school after having flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care, or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.

For more information, visit

www.cdc.gov/flu

or call 800-CDC-INFO



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



What Is Breast Cancer?

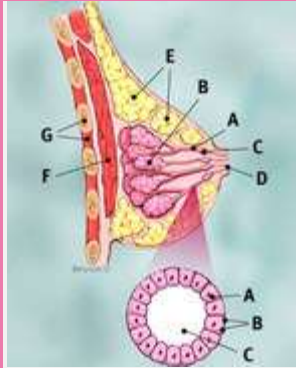
Breast cancer is an uncontrolled growth of breast cells. To better understand breast cancer, it helps to understand how any cancer can develop.

Cancer occurs as a result of mutations, or abnormal changes, in the genes responsible for regulating the growth of cells and keeping them healthy. The genes are in each cell's nucleus, which acts as the "control room" of each cell. Normally, the cells in our bodies replace themselves through an orderly process of cell growth: healthy new cells take over as old ones die out. But over time, mutations can "turn on" certain genes and "turn off" others in a cell. That changed cell gains the ability to keep dividing without control or order, producing more cells just like it and forming a tumor.

A tumor can be benign (not dangerous to health) or malignant (has the potential to be dangerous). Benign tumors are not considered cancerous: their cells are close to normal in appearance, they grow slowly, and they do not invade nearby tissues or spread to other parts of the body. Malignant tumors are cancerous. Left unchecked, malignant cells eventually can spread beyond the original tumor to other parts of the body.

The term "breast cancer" refers to a malignant tumor that has developed from cells in the breast. Usually breast cancer either begins

in the cells of the lobules, which are the milk-producing glands, or the ducts, the passages that drain milk from the lobules to the nipple. Less commonly, breast cancer can begin in the stromal tissues, which include the fatty and fibrous connective tissues of the breast.



Breast Anatomy[Larger Version](#)

Over time, cancer cells can invade nearby healthy breast tissue and make their way into the underarm lymph nodes, small organs that filter out foreign substances in the body. If cancer cells get into the lymph nodes, they then have a pathway into other parts of the body. The breast cancer's stage refers to how far the cancer cells have spread beyond the original tumor (see the Stages of breast cancer below for more information).

Breast cancer is always caused by a genetic abnormality (a "mistake" in the genetic material). However, only 5-10% of cancers are due to an abnormality inherited from your mother or father. Instead, 85-90% of breast cancers are due to genetic abnormalities that happen as a result of the aging process and the "wear and tear" of life in general.

There are steps every person can take to help the body stay as healthy as possible, such as eating a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, limiting alcohol, and exercising regularly (learn what you can do to manage [breast cancer risk factors](#)). While these may have some impact on your risk of getting breast cancer, they cannot eliminate the risk.

Developing breast cancer is not your or anyone's fault. Feeling guilty, or telling yourself that breast cancer happened because of something you or anyone else did, is not productive.

Stages of breast cancer

The stage of a breast cancer is determined by the cancer's characteristics, such as how large it is and whether or not it has hormone receptors. The stage of the cancer helps you and your doctor:

- figure out your prognosis, the likely outcome of the disease
- decide on the best treatment options for you
- determine if certain clinical trials may be a good option for you

Breast cancer stage is usually expressed as a number on a scale of 0 through IV — with stage 0 describing non-invasive cancers that remain within their original location and stage IV describing invasive cancers that have spread outside the breast to other parts of the body

Symptoms and Diagnosis

Breast cancer symptoms vary widely — from lumps to swelling to skin changes — and many breast cancers have no obvious symptoms at all.

In some cases, a lump may be too small for you to feel or to cause any unusual changes you can notice on your own. Often, an abnormal area turns up on a screening mammogram (X-ray of the breast), which leads to further testing.

In other cases, however, the first sign of breast cancer is a new lump or mass in the breast that you or your doctor can feel. A lump that is painless, hard, and has uneven edges is more likely to be cancer. But sometimes cancers can be tender, soft, and rounded.

It's important to have anything unusual checked by your doctor.

According to the American Cancer Society, any of the following unusual changes in the breast can be a symptom of breast cancer:

- swelling of all or part of the breast
- skin irritation or dimpling

- breast pain
- nipple pain or the nipple turning inward
- redness, scaliness, or thickening of the nipple or breast skin
- a nipple discharge other than breast milk
- a lump in the underarm area

These changes also can be signs of less serious conditions that are not cancerous, such as an infection or a cyst. Again, it's important to get any breast changes checked out promptly by a doctor.

[Breast self-exam](#) should be part of your monthly health care routine, and you should visit your doctor if you experience breast changes. If you're over 40 or at a high risk of breast cancer, you should also have an annual [mammogram](#) and physical exam by a doctor. The earlier breast cancer is found and diagnosed, the better your chances of beating it.

The actual process of diagnosis can take weeks and involve many different kinds of tests. Waiting for results can feel like a lifetime. The uncertainty stinks. But once you understand your own unique "big picture," you can make better decisions. You and your doctors can formulate a treatment plan tailored just for you.

Learn [more about breast changes](#) [More](#) [at: BreastCancer.org](#)



- It is cold and flu season!...**Wash your hands at every opportunity!** Germs are present everywhere, but especially on door knobs, telephones, sink faucets, and any other public, touchable surface!
- **Get your Flu Shot!** Getting a flu shot often protects you from getting the flu. And although the flu shot doesn't always provide total protection, it's worth getting.
- **Rest, Rest, Rest!** The workdays are long and can be very stressful. Take time to wind down and rest when time allows. Set yourself a bedtime and stick to it to ensure that you get ample sleep to tackle the next day.