

vHealth Medical Director's top 10 ways to help avoid flu during the COVID-19 pandemic



Seasonal flu is an annual health threat, but the stakes are higher during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contracting both highly contagious respiratory infections could lead to serious illness or complications. Dr Nairah Rasul-Syed, vHealth Medical Director and Family Medicine Consultant, gives 10 suggestions to help you protect yourself and those around you.

- 1. Get a flu vaccine.** Although the flu vaccine does not always prevent illness, it can reduce the severity of disease and risk of complications and even death. This is particularly important for people at high risk of complications. See page 2 for more information.
- 2. Keep your germs to yourself.** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw away the tissue.
- 3. Wash your hands frequently.** Especially after coughing, sneezing, using the washroom and before eating. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If that's not possible, use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- 4. Keep your hands away from your face.** Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, the most common entry points for viruses.
- 5. Clean germ surfaces.** Use alcohol-based disinfectant wipes on common touch surfaces like doorknobs, handrails, elevator (lift) buttons, keyboards and faucets (taps). Disinfect your mobile phone, too.
- 6. Avoid people who are sick.** Maintain a distance of six feet or more. The social-distancing measures that can prevent COVID-19 can also prevent the flu.
- 7. Stay home if you're sick.** This minimises the risk of infecting others until you are fever free — without fever-reducing medicine — for 24 hours. Give yourself a chance to recover and speak to your doctor if you have any concerns.
- 8. Get plenty of rest and stay hydrated.** Limit caffeine intake to 2-3 cups per day.
- 9. Strengthen your immune system.** A balanced diet, regular exercise when well, and getting enough sleep is beneficial.
- 10. Follow your doctor's orders.** Most patients can be managed with symptomatic treatment aimed at relieving symptoms of influenza, such as fever. However if you are considered high risk, your doctor might also recommend antiviral medication early on, to reduce the risk of complications.

Facts about flu



Influenza is typically caused by Influenza A or B virus. The infection commonly spreads through droplets in the air when expelled by coughing, sneezing or by through hands contaminated with influenza virus.



Transmission is rapid in crowded areas, and can spread up to one meter. Common symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache and fatigue. The flu can last a few days or up to two weeks and you might be infection up to 2 days before the onset of symptoms.



The best way to prevent the flu is to be vaccinated, every year. This is especially important if you are considered at high risk of complications: Older adults > age 65 years | Health workers | Pregnant women | Children

aged between 6 months and 5 years | Individuals with chronic health conditions (e.g. diabetes) | Anyone else who lives with or cares for high risk individuals.



The best time to get flu vaccine is usually in October and before “Flu Season” (December to February in the Northern Hemisphere). It can take up to 2 weeks to build up immunity. Flu viruses evolve and change rapidly, which means that new influenza vaccines are developed every year in order to remain effective.



We can't vaccinate against COVID-19, but we can vaccinate against flu. Talk with your doctor and take action today to protect yourself, your friends, family, colleagues and community. Check your insurance well-being policy coverage and make an appointment today.

For more information on flu, see these resources found in Aetna's 'COVID-19 resources':

'Your flu and COVID-19 questions answered' flyer

'Supercharge your immune system to fight flu (and COVID-19)' flyer

'10 tips to prevent and manage flu and other seasonal viruses': <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/fit-for-duty-corporate-wellness/10-tips-prevent-flu-seasonal-illness.html>

This year, protecting yourself from flu is more important than ever, and we are here to help. As an Aetna International member, you can call us using the number on the back of your member ID card. Download the [vHealth by Aetna app](#)^{**}. Log in to the [Health Hub](#), your secure member website, to find out more about vHealth*, to contact the Aetna CARE team to ask health care questions or to search our directory of in-network hospitals or clinics. In Dubai? Download and log in to the [vHealth \(Dubai\) app](#), contact the tollfree number on 8000 35704672 or email support@vhealth.co.ae^{**}. In Thailand? Download the [vHealth \(Thailand\) app](#)^{**}. For more information about your health care benefits, contact your plan sponsor.

Be a flu fighter. Protect yourself, protect others.

COVID-19 resources: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/remote-working-social-distancing-support-resource.html>

Health Hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>

*For those eligible | **All vHealth apps can also be downloaded from the App Store.

Primary sources

[https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/influenza-\(seasonal\)](https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/influenza-(seasonal))
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/treeresources/updated/everyday-preventive-actions-8.5x11.pdf>
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321005#hygiene>

<https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/fit-for-duty-corporate-wellness/seasonal-illness-flu-vaccines-workplace-hygiene.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm>

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