

Key facts about influenza (flu)

What is influenza?

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.

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

How flu spreads

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Copyright 2014
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>



What you can do to prevent the flu

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your child gets sick with a flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you (or your child) stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. The 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.
- If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Copyright 2013
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/everyday_preventive.pdf

Who shouldn't get the flu shot?

Check with your doctor before receiving a flu vaccine if:

- **You're allergic to eggs.** Some flu vaccines contain tiny amounts of egg proteins. If you have an egg allergy or sensitivity, you'll likely be able to receive a flu vaccine — but you might need to take special precautions, such as waiting in the doctor's office for at least 30 minutes after vaccination in case of a reaction. There's also a flu vaccine that doesn't contain egg proteins approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in people age 18 and older. Consult your doctor about your options.
- **You had a severe reaction to a previous flu vaccine.** The flu vaccine isn't recommended for anyone who had a severe reaction to a previous flu vaccine. Check with your doctor first, though. Some reactions might not be related to the vaccine.

Source: The Mayo Clinic
Copyright 2014
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/flu/in-depth/flu-shots/art-20048000?pg=1>

Flu vaccination and vaccination safety

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get the flu vaccine. Seasonal flu vaccines have a very good safety track record.

Availability

- The flu vaccine is available by shot or nasal spray.
- Get your flu shot or spray as soon as the vaccine is available in your area.
- It is especially important to get the vaccine if you, someone you live with, or someone you care for is at high risk of complications from the flu.
- Mild reactions such as soreness, headaches, and fever are common side effects of the flu vaccine.
- If you experience a severe reaction such as difficulty breathing, hives, or facial swelling, seek medical attention immediately.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is the best protection against the flu this season. If you get the flu vaccine, you are 60% less likely to need treatment for the flu by a healthcare provider. Getting the vaccine has been shown to offer substantial other benefits including reducing illness, antibiotic use, time lost from work, hospitalizations, and deaths.

When should I get the vaccine?

Get the vaccine as soon as it is available in your area. Flu season usually peaks in January or February, but it can occur as late as May. Early immunization is the most effective, but it is not too late to get the vaccine in December, January, or later.

How long is my flu vaccination good for?

The flu vaccine will protect you for one flu season.

Will I need to pay for the vaccine?

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of vaccines, but you should check with your insurance company before visiting your health care provider. Under the Affordable Care Act, many insurers are required to cover certain preventive services, like the flu vaccine, at no cost to you.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Copyright 2014
<http://www.flu.gov/prevention-vaccination/vaccination/index.html>

Japanese-style beef and noodle soup

Ingredients

For broth:

- 4 oz shiitake mushroom stems, rinsed (remove caps and set aside) (or substitute dried shiitake mushrooms)
- 1 Tbsp garlic, minced (about 2–3 cloves)
- 1 Tbsp ginger, minced
- 1 stalk lemongrass, crushed (or the zest from 1 lemon: Use a peeler to grate a thin layer of skin off a lemon)
- 1 Tbsp ground coriander
- 4 c low-sodium beef broth
- 1 Tbsp lite soy sauce



For meat and vegetables:

- 1 bag (12 oz) frozen vegetable stir-fry
- 4 oz shiitake mushrooms caps, rinsed and quartered
- 8 oz udon or soba noodles (or substitute angel hair pasta), cooked
- 1 lb lean beef top sirloin, sliced very thin
- 4 oz firm silken tofu, diced
- ¼ c scallions (green onions), rinsed and sliced thin

Directions

1. Thaw frozen vegetables in the microwave (or place entire bag in a bowl of hot water for about 10 minutes). Set aside until step 4.
2. Combine all ingredients for broth, except soy sauce, in a medium-sized pot or saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Strain the broth through a fine wire colander, and discard the solid parts. Season to taste with soy sauce.
4. To finish the soup, bring the broth back to a boil. Add the thawed vegetable stir-fry mix and mushroom caps, and simmer for 1 minute.
5. Add the noodles and continue to simmer for another minute.
6. Add the beef and continue to simmer for about 5 minutes or until the beef is slightly pink to brown (to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F).
7. Add tofu and scallions, and simmer 1–2 minutes until heated through.
8. Serve immediately in 1-cup portions.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Copyright 2014
<https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/recipe/detail.aspx?cId=0&rId=8>