Cleaning to Prevent the Flu

How long can the flu virus live on objects, such as doorknobs and tables?

The flu virus can “live” on some surfaces for up to 24 hours. Routine cleaning of surfaces may reduce the spread of flu.

What kills flu viruses?

Flu viruses are killed by heat above 167°F [75°C]. Common household cleaning products can also kill the flu virus, including products containing:

- chlorine
- hydrogen peroxide
- detergents (soap)
- iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics)
- alcohols

How should a caregiver handle a sick person’s tissues or other items?

Make sure to wash your hands after touching the sick person. Also wash after handling their tissues or laundry.

For more information call CDC info at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or go to www.cdc.gov/flu.
Influenza (Flu)

What is the flu?
The flu is an illness caused by flu viruses. The flu may make people cough and have a sore throat and fever. They may also have a runny or stuffy nose, feel tired, have body aches, or show other signs they are not well. The flu happens every year and is more common in the fall and winter in the U.S. People of all ages can get the flu, from babies and young adults, to the elderly.

Flu in People

Do people in the U.S. get the flu?
Yes. Flu viruses spread worldwide. Flu tends to occur mostly in the fall and winter months in the United States. Many people get the flu each year. The flu is also found in other parts of the world. But the time of year when flu is most common can vary from one area to another.

How does the flu spread?
People who have the flu can spread the virus by coughing or sneezing. Droplets released when a sick person coughs, sneezes, or talks can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs.

People may also catch the flu by touching their mouth or nose after touching something with the virus on it, such as doorknobs, tables, or an infected person’s dirty hand.

Spread of the virus:
How do you know if you have the flu?

Signs of the flu can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Feeling weak or more tired than usual
- Headache
- Chills
- Body aches
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Two less common signs of the flu include:

Not everyone who is sick with flu will have all the signs of the flu at the same time. Some people with the flu don’t have a fever. Most people who get the flu get better without seeing a doctor or taking medicine.
How sick do people get with the flu?

Some people get very sick and others do not. Most people who get sick get better without seeing a doctor or taking medicine. However, some people can get very sick from the flu and can die. Many of the people who get very sick are older than 65 years or have a medical condition such as: diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or kidney disease, or are pregnant. Children younger than 5 years of age are also at greater risk.

How long can a person with the flu spread the virus to other people?

Most people may be able to spread the flu from 1 day before showing symptoms to 5 to 7 days after symptoms begin. Severely ill persons or young children may be able to spread the flu longer.

Prevention & Treatment

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

CDC recommends these steps to fight the flu:

- Vaccination
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Use medication the way your doctor recommends it.
Everyday health habits to protect your health and the health of others:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your arm 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.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth because germs spread this way.
- If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.*

*Your fever should be gone without using fever-reducing medicine. Staying at home means that you should not leave your house except to get medical care. Stay away from others as much as possible so you don’t make them sick.

During flu season, be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a few days. Keep some over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues, and anything else you need so that you do not have to go out while you are sick. If you are really sick or have other medical conditions or concerns, call your doctor. Your doctor will let you know if you need a flu test, flu treatment, or other care.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with the flu, should I go to work?

People who are not sick but have a sick family member at home with the flu can go to work as usual. Take simple steps such as washing your hands often with soap and warm water. If you cannot find soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Take these steps to prevent getting the flu from a sick family member.
What is the best way to wash my hands to avoid germs?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. When you wash your hands:

- Use soap and warm water.
- Wash for 15 to 20 seconds.

When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. If using a hand rub, rub your hands with the sanitizer until they are dry.

If you or someone you know gets sick and shows any of the following warning signs, get **EMERGENCY** medical care:

**In children:**

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Serious or constant vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

**In infants:**

You should also look for these warning signs: being unable to eat, having no tears when crying, and having far fewer wet diapers than normal.
In adults:

- Hard time breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Serious or constant vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Are there medicines to treat the flu?

Yes. Prescription medicines called antiviral drugs can treat the flu. If you are sick, these drugs can make you feel better faster and make the flu feel milder. Most people who get sick get better without the need for these medicines. But, if you need help getting well, your doctor may decide to give you antiviral drugs.

For more information call CDC info at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or go to www.cdc.gov/flu.
In your child’s school
Some cases of influenza (flu) have been reported from your child’s school. Flu is different from the common cold. It can cause fever, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, and vomiting. Flu can be very serious and may even cause death in some people with chronic health conditions, young children, pregnant women, or elderly persons.

How does the flu spread?
Flu spreads between people when those sick with the flu cough, sneeze, or even talk. The flu virus can be spread to people up to six feet away. Flu can also spread when people touch their face or eyes after touching something that a sick person has touched.

How to prevent the flu?
Use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “Take 3 Actions”

1. Flu vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu. DHEC strongly recommends all South Carolina residents older than 6 months old get the flu vaccine as soon as possible to prevent the flu, unless they have a medical reason not to be vaccinated.

2. Take everyday preventive actions. Avoid close contact with ill persons. Keep child home if they have a fever (100°F or higher), until the fever has resolved without the use of medicines for a duration of 24 hours. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or upper sleeve when you cough or sneeze. Frequently, wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub. Clean and disinfect surfaces high touch areas frequently.

3. Take influenza antiviral medicines, if prescribed.

Quick Stats
In the US every day, an estimated 55 million students and 7 million staff attend over 130,000 public and private schools. Implementing the CDC “Take 3 Actions” would aid in preventing influenza infection among one-fifth of the total US population (CDC, 2016).

According to a recently published CDC study, flu vaccination reduced the risk of a flu-associated death by 65% among healthy children and 51% among children with high-risk medical conditions (CDC, 2017).

Resources
More information is available at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DHEC websites:
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/
http://www.dhec.sc.gov/flu/
Advice for Parents on Talking to Children About the Flu

Focus on what your child can do to fight the flu and to not spread flu to others:

- Have your child get a flu vaccine. The flu shot may pinch, but it will help protect them from getting sick later. A flu vaccine given as a nasal spray may also be available.

- Encourage them to cough and sneeze into a tissue when they are sick. Throw the tissue in the trash right away. If they do not have a tissue, they should cover their mouth and nose with their arm.

- Encourage them to stay away from people who are sick.

- Encourage them to wash hands often with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds. Set a good example by doing this yourself.

- Encourage them to stay home from work and school if they are sick, and stay away from people until they are better.
Encourage healthy habits: eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, and getting exercise.

Use their questions as a chance to tell them how to avoid the flu and how to not spread flu and other germs.

For more information call CDC info at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or go to www.cdc.gov/flu.
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 since 2010, between 7,000 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 who are 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.
- 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 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. Common side effects from the flu shot are soreness where the shot is given, headaches, muscle aches, and fever. These side effects are generally mild and go away on their own within a few days. A flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness. 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 and older without 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-related 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:
- Emergency warning signs of flu:
- 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. 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 giving the flu to other children or caregivers.

When can my child go back to school after having the 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
What to Do If Your Child Gets Sick with the Flu

Children younger than 5 years old have a greater chance of having problems with the flu. Children with a long term condition such as asthma and diabetes are also more likely to have severe problems if they get the flu.

If your child is younger than 5 years of age or of any age with a long term health condition (like asthma or diabetes), and develops flu-like symptoms, they are at risk for serious complications from the flu.

Ask a doctor if your child should be examined.

Most children will get better without needing to go to the doctor. Other children may have more severe illness from the flu. A child of any age with severe signs of the flu should go to the doctor.

Antiviral drugs used to treat the flu work best when started within the first 2 days (48 hours) of getting sick.

The doctor may start your child on antiviral drugs even after 48 hours from when flu signs started, especially if your child is in the hospital or has a higher chance of severe illness from the flu.
A fever is a temperature greater than or equal to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you do not have a thermometer, feel your child’s face. If your child feels warmer than normal, has a flushed appearance, is sweating, or is shivering, your child may have a fever.

If your child has a fever there are medicines that can be used to reduce the fever. Some are sold at stores (over-the-counter) and you can buy them freely. Others require a prescription from a doctor. Make sure you talk to your doctor and see what medicine your doctor recommends based on your child’s age.

Some medicines sold in stores (over-the-counter) are approved for children to make them feel better. You should call your doctor to make sure these medicines are okay for your child. Note that you should never give aspirin to children who might have the flu.
To reduce the spread of the flu, keep your sick child at home until at least 24 hours after the fever is gone, except to get medical care.

Children can go back to school 24 hours after their fever is gone WITHOUT the use of medicine that lowers fever.

While your child is sick, make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants, Pedialyte®) to make sure his or her body has the fluids it needs.
**Things to do to reduce the spread of flu to others in the house:**

Keep your sick child in a separate room in the house as much as possible to limit contact with healthy household members.

Do not allow your child to share food or drinks with others.

Try to have one person as the main caregiver for the sick child. If possible the caregiver should be someone who is not at high risk for severe flu, such as pregnant women or people with health conditions like asthma.

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