



# General Information on Flu/Influenza

## What is Flu/Influenza?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It may cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing, sneezing or intimate contact. Flu viruses also spread when people touch something with flu virus on it and then touch their mouth, eyes or nose. People at high risk of serious flu complications include the elderly, young children, pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart and lung diseases.

## Signs and Symptoms

AIG Travel recommends all travelers familiarize themselves with some of the signs and symptoms of influenza and seek medical assistance as soon as possible, if symptoms are identified

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea (this is more common in children than adults).

## Populations at “High Risk” for Flu/Influenza Complications

- Children five years of age and younger
- Children and adolescents (under the age of 18) on long-term aspirin therapy
- Adults who are 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- Adults and children with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, organ failure, cardiovascular disease, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular or metabolic disorders such as Diabetes Mellitus
- Adults and children with compromised immune systems

## Medical Management and Treatment of Influenza Infection

The 2019-2020 flu season occurs during the fall and winter months, but can last as late as May in the U.S. This year the vaccine is only about 32% effective, but it is still recommended that everyone obtain an influenza vaccination. AIG Travel recommends obtaining an annual influenza vaccination as soon as the flu vaccine becomes available. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body. The flu vaccine is formulated each year because flu viruses change over time.

Annual vaccinations of people at “high risk” for influenza complications may decrease their risk of contracting severe flu illness. Children younger than six months old are at high-risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for them should be vaccinated instead. Annual vaccinations of health care workers and people who live with or care for people at “high risk” for influenza complications may help prevent spreading the flu to the high-risk populations.

During the [WHO Consultation on the Composition of Influenza Vaccines for the Southern Hemisphere 2019](#), WHO recommended trivalent vaccines for use in the 2019 influenza season (northern hemisphere) contain the following:

- A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus;
- B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage).

Quadrivalent (four-component) vaccines, which protect against a second lineage of B viruses, are recommended to contain:

- The three recommended viruses above, plus B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (Yamagata lineage) virus.



### Flu Antiviral Drugs

Your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs, which may help make the illness milder and may decrease the amount of time that you are sick. Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquids or inhaled powders) and are not available for purchase over-the-counter. These drugs should be used within the first two days of symptoms to treat people who are very sick (such as those who are hospitalized) or people with flu symptoms with an increased risk of severe flu illness (i.e., pregnant women, young children, people 65 and older and people with certain chronic health conditions).

### Learn More

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### AIG Travel's Basic Tips for Prevention of the Flu

AIG Travel recommends you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone unless you need medical care or other necessities. Below are additional tips:

- Avoid or limit contact with people who are sick or may have been exposed to the flu.
- Try to avoid large crowds if there is a flu breakout. Shop on days and times when there will be less people out.
- Refrain from touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid stress and get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fresh water and eat as healthy as possible (e.g. fresh fruits and vegetables).
- Take immune-boosting supplements and vitamins if approved by your health care provider.
- Prepare for trips by consulting local health and travel advisories to avoid areas of outbreaks.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw used tissues in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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