



Department of Environmental Health  
Public Health Inspection  
200 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 200  
Denver, CO 80204-2732  
phone: 720.913.1311  
fax: 720.865.5532  
[www.denvergov.org/phi](http://www.denvergov.org/phi)

## Facts about Respiratory Influenza

### How Flu Spreads

#### *Person to Person*

People with flu can spread it to others up to about 6 feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

(To avoid this, people should wash their hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, they should use an alcohol-based hand rub to clean their hands. Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Eating utensils can be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap and do not need to be cleaned separately.)

### The Flu Is Contagious

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days **after** becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than seven days. Symptoms start one to four days after the virus enters the body. **That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.** Some persons can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others. **A person should not return to work or come in close contact with others until symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours.**

### Flu Symptoms & Severity

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- 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.*

**If you have further questions about controlling the spread of flu in your establishment, please contact the division of Public Health Inspections within the Denver Department of Environmental Health by dialing 720-913-1311**

