



# “STEP UP” TO PREVENT FLU

*This information from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is for Veterans and their families. This fact sheet explains steps you can take to help stop the spread of flu!*

## Step 1 Get your flu shot

- Everyone age 6 months and older is recommended to get a flu shot each year by VA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Getting a flu shot is the best way to slow the spread of flu from person to person.
- Get a flu shot every year as flu viruses can change from year to year.
- Anyone can get flu, but some people are at high risk for complications from flu:
  - ▶ people age 65 and older.
  - ▶ people with health problems like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, and other chronic illnesses or conditions.
  - ▶ pregnant women or people caring for an infant or a family member with health problems.

## Step 2 Know how flu is spread

- When a person with flu sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, flu virus can spread into the air as droplets.
- The droplets can spread to people and surfaces up to 6 feet away.
- Flu virus can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the virus on it. If you then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth, you might get flu.
- A person can spread flu to others about 1 day before they feel sick and up to 5 days after getting sick.

## Step 3 Know the symptoms of flu

- Fever (100 F or higher).
- Body and muscle aches.
- Headache.
- Feeling tired or weak (can be extreme).
- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Stomach symptoms (mostly in children).

**Each year in the U.S., thousands die and many more are hospitalized because of flu.**

## Step 4 Clean your hands AND surfaces around you

- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Use paper towels to dry hands or don't share cloth towels.
- Clean your hands:
  - ▶ before eating or preparing food.
  - ▶ before and after caring for someone who is sick.
  - ▶ after coughing or sneezing.
  - ▶ after using the bathroom.
- Flu virus can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours.
- Clean surfaces that are touched often such as: phones, faucets, light switches, countertops, door and cabinet handles, keyboard and mouse, and TV remotes.

## Step 5 Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Use clean tissues and discard after each use.
- Coughing or sneezing into your sleeve is OK when you don't have a tissue.
- Always clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.

## Step 6 Stay home when sick

- Because flu spreads easily from person to person, stay home when you are sick.
- Studies show you are most contagious and likely to spread flu virus to others for at least 5 days after your first symptoms start AND at least 48 hours after your last fever.



**“STEP UP” TO PREVENT FLU: You can reduce the spread of flu this year. As fall and winter approach, we all face the health challenges of flu season.**

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

[www.prevention.va.gov/flu](http://www.prevention.va.gov/flu)

[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
VHA National Center of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention  
[VHAFluProgram@va.gov](mailto:VHAFluProgram@va.gov)

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