Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What is the best way for me to prevent the flu?
- What flu vaccine is approved for me?
- When is the best time to get the vaccine?
- Where is the best place for me to get the flu vaccine?
- What are my risks if I don’t get the vaccine?
- How does the flu vaccine protect my heart?
- What are common side effects of the flu vaccine?
- What is the best flu treatment?
- If I get the flu, what symptoms would require a call to my doctor?
- Where can I find more information about the flu and my options?

Contact Us
If you would like to receive support or need more information, please contact us at:

The Mended Hearts, Inc.
1500 Dawson Road
Albany, GA 31707
1-888-HEART99
info@mendedhearts.org
www.mendedhearts.org

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What is the flu?
Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is a respiratory virus that attacks the lungs, nose, and throat. Many people also call stomach viruses “the flu,” but they are not the flu. There are two main types of flu virus—type A and type B. Both are treated the same way. The “flu season” is typically October through May, but people can get the flu any time of year.

9 million to 41 million illnesses from flu per year (2010-2020 averages)
12,000 to 52,000 die from flu each year (2010-2020 averages)

The flu virus is very contagious and can cause severe illness. People most at risk of severe illness from the flu are:
- Children under 6 months
- Pregnant women
- People with certain chronic health conditions (asthma, COPD, heart disease, prior stroke, diabetes, cancer, and people with autoimmune diseases)
- Adults 65+ (Adults 65+ account for 70% of hospitalizations from flu and 85% of deaths)

Flu and Heart Disease
Studies show that having the flu raises your risk of heart attack and stroke. In fact, one in eight patients with the flu in a 2020 study had sudden, serious heart complications. Another study shows the risk of having a heart attack is six times higher within one week of getting the flu. The good news is the flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk for some cardiac events.

Protecting yourself and others
Vaccines are one of the best ways to protect your health. The flu vaccine can prevent flu and also can reduce the severity of the flu. It is shown to reduce doctor visits due to flu by 40% to 60%. A 2021 study showed that vaccinated people hospitalized for flu had 26% fewer ICU visits and 31% fewer deaths.

Other ways to keep everyone healthy are:
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing
- Stay home if you have symptoms.
- Disinfect surfaces.
- Avoid contact with others who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap
- Take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods and drinking lots of fluids.

Myth vs. Fact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Fact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The flu shot will give me the flu.</td>
<td>The flu shot does not give you the flu. You may have side effects as your body builds immunity, but they should go away. Severe reactions are rare.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The flu shot doesn’t work because people still get the flu.</td>
<td>The flu shot doesn’t prevent all cases of the flu. If you were vaccinated and get the flu, you are likely to get a much milder case with a lower chance of hospitalization and death.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am usually healthy, so I won’t get a severe case of the flu.</td>
<td>High-risk people, and even low-risk people, can get a severe case of flu even if they are normally healthy.</td>
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<td>I have heart disease, so the vaccine is too risky for me.</td>
<td>The vaccine has been shown to reduce risks for people with heart disease.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antibiotics cure the flu, so I can just take them to get better.</td>
<td>The flu is a virus, so antibiotics won’t help. Rest, fluids, eating well, antiviral and over the counter medications may help symptoms.</td>
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</tbody>
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Common Symptoms
- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Chills
- Body aches
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Headache
- Fatigue, feeling very tired
- Sick to stomach

Not all people will have fever or stomach symptoms

Information in this Discussion Guide is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).