

# The flu

The flu is caused by viruses and tends to occur in outbreaks, particularly in winter.

It causes a high fever, muscle aches, headache, a sore throat, general malaise, a blocked nose and a dry cough.

Other viruses can cause the same symptoms.

It usually clears up within a week. The cough and fatigue may persist for a further two weeks.

## What should I do if I have the flu?

You should stay in bed whilst you have a fever or feel unwell.

Drink more than two litres of fluids a day (water, juices, herbal teas, soups, broths).

For a fever, if you are not allergic, take paracetamol every 6 hours if needed.

Gently sponging the body with lukewarm water may help.

Antibiotics are of no use.

## When should you contact your family doctor?

You should seek medical attention if the fever lasts for more than 4 days or if you are having difficulty breathing.

You can make an appointment by calling the **Sanitat Respon** helpline on **061** or by contacting your local Primary Care Centre.

## How can we prevent the spread?

The flu is a contagious illness.

Both the person who is ill and those around them should wash their hands frequently with soap and water and wear a face mask.

Use disposable tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and dispose of them in a sealed bag.

The sick person's room should be ventilated by opening the window several times a day.

## Is there a vaccine?

Viruses are constantly mutating, and new vaccines are developed every year, depending on which virus is likely to affect us this winter.

## Who is the flu vaccine recommended for?

The flu vaccine is recommended for people at high risk of developing complications from the flu.

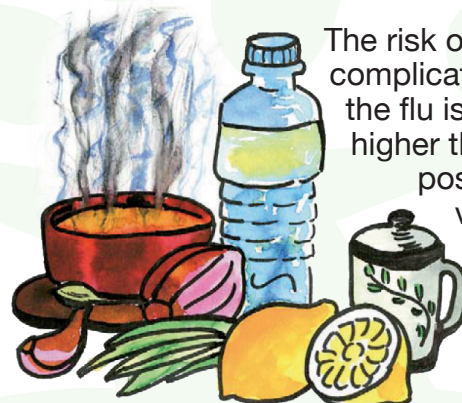
This includes people over the age of 60, those with chronic heart, lung or kidney conditions, people with diabetes, and people with weakened immune systems. It is also recommended for pregnant women and children with chronic illnesses.

## Benefits of the flu vaccine

Getting vaccinated **reduces the risk** of catching the flu. If you do catch it, it reduces symptoms and complications such as pneumonia or hospitalisation. It also **protects other vulnerable people** who cannot be vaccinated.

## Are there any risks associated with the vaccine?

The flu vaccine is safe, but in rare cases it may cause arm pain, a slight fever and tiredness within 24 hours of the injection. In very rare cases, it may cause allergic reactions.



The risk of complications from the flu is much higher than the risk posed by the vaccine itself.