

# FLU WHO?

## Reviewing the Prevention and Treatment of Influenza

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Influenza was **uncommon last year** likely due to social distancing and masks. It is too soon to tell what influenza activity will be like this year, but here is a **quick review** on the treatment and prevention of influenza.

### What is influenza?

- **Contagious respiratory illness** caused by influenza viruses (mainly A and B strains)
- Infects the **nose, throat**, and sometimes **lungs**

### What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms can be **similar to COVID-19**. Read more about this [here](#)
- Fever/chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle/body aches, headaches, and fatigue

### What are the complications?

- **50,000+ hospital admissions & 400+ deaths** in kids in 2019-2020
- Flu disrupts the lungs, sinuses, and ears leading to bacterial infections requiring antibiotics
- **Dehydration** and **worsening of long-term medical issues**
- Rarely causes brain dysfunction and encephalopathy
- Click [here](#) to learn more

### How do I prevent influenza?

- **All people  $\geq 6$  months** should receive the flu vaccine ideally by Oct 31st
- **Some kids  $\leq 8$  years** need 2 flu vaccines in a season. Learn more [here](#)
- Certain flu vaccines provide improved protection for **adults  $\geq 65$  years**. Learn more [here](#)
- **COVID-19 & flu vaccine** may be given at the same time. Learn more [here](#)
- Some high-risk patients may receive **antiviral medications to prevent flu** after being exposed
- Wash your hands, avoid touching your face, disinfect high touch surfaces, stay home when sick, and cover your mouth when sneezing/coughing
- Masks should be worn by healthcare workers caring for patients with flu

### Who should be treated for influenza?

- Antibiotics are not effective for flu!
- Flu is mostly mild and self-limited. **Drink fluids and rest**
- **Antiviral medications** may shorten symptoms by 1-2 days and reduce complications if given early **especially in high-risk patients**
- High-risk patients should **contact their doctor**. Antivirals may be prescribed. Learn more [here](#)
- Healthcare providers can read about flu treatment and prophylaxis [here](#)



Guest author, Christine Symes, MSN, CPNP, is a pediatric nurse practitioner in Infectious Diseases. She has worked at CM for 15 years. Christine has special interest in vaccinations in children and is co-leading a QI project to improve vaccination rates in patients admitted to CM!