WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INFLUENZA

What Is Influenza?
Influenza ("the flu") is a viral illness that can cause serious health problems, including hospitalization and death. It is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes near you. It affects people of all ages, and symptoms may be hard to differentiate from those of other illnesses, including COVID-19. It is usually spread during the winter months but can be spread all year long.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms?
- Sudden-onset high fever
- Cough
- Feeling tired and weak
- Muscle pain and soreness
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Sudden onset of fever
- Cough
- Feeling fatigued
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Sore throat

How Is It Diagnosed?
Your doctor will ask questions about your symptoms. This is usually enough to diagnose the flu; however, in some cases, you may need a physical examination or tests. Testing may be necessary to distinguish the flu from other illnesses, such as COVID-19, because symptoms can be similar.

Can It Cause Health Complications?
Usually, the flu is not serious, and you will start to feel better after 3–5 days and recover fully within 1–2 weeks. However, in some persons, it can cause serious complications resulting in hospitalization or even death. You are at higher risk for complications if you:
- Are aged 65 years or older
- Are pregnant
- Live in a nursing home
- Are an American Indian or Alaska Native
- Have certain health problems, including lung disease, heart disease, kidney or liver disorders, obesity, or a weakened immune system

How Is It Treated?
The flu is usually treated with rest, drinking clear fluids, and managing your fevers and aches with over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. You should not take aspirin. If you are at risk for complications or have worsening symptoms, your doctor may prescribe medicines called antivirals to help your body fight the virus. These work best when started within 2 days of symptoms but may work if started later.

Should I Get a Flu Shot?
Everyone aged 6 months or older should get a flu shot each year, preferably in the fall (September or October in the Northern Hemisphere). If you

For More Information
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm
MedlinePlus
https://medlineplus.gov/flu.html