

## Notes:

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2. We would like to thank the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) for giving us permission to include their patient education material in our product.

## People with asthma need to take extra precautions to avoid the flu

### Allergy and Immunology Awareness Program



#### Patient and Family Education

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## People with asthma need to take extra precautions to avoid the flu

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It can cause mild to severe illness. It can also cause death in severe cases. The flu can affect your lungs when you have asthma.

It can cause inflammation (swelling) and narrowing of your airways. These changes could trigger asthma symptoms, an asthma episode, or an asthma attack. If you have asthma, defending yourself against the flu is very important.

Most healthy people recover from the flu without problems. Having asthma puts you at risk of serious health problems from the flu.

### The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) has advice for fighting the flu if you have asthma:

- **Get the flu shot every fall:** Flu season begins in the fall and goes through the spring. Get the actual shot, not the nasal spray vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine can trigger asthma symptoms. The flu shot is safe. If you have asthma, the risks are far greater not getting the vaccine. It takes about two weeks after getting the vaccine for your body to create protective antibodies to the flu virus.
- **Make it a family affair:** Have family members without asthma get the flu shot to protect those that do have asthma.
- **Prevent exposure.** The flu can be very contagious. Properly wash your hands often and do not share food or utensils. If possible, avoid people who are sick.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider:** Update your asthma action plan with your healthcare providers so that you know what to do if you get sick.

If you get sick with flu symptoms, call your doctor immediately. People with asthma can quickly become sicker with the flu. Your doctor may recommend treatment with an antiviral medicine or a change to your normal asthma treatment.

### Common flu symptoms:

The flu usually starts suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- Fever (often very high, 101F or above).
- Headache.

- Extreme tiredness.
- Chills.
- Constant cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Body aches in bones and/or muscles.

Diarrhea and vomiting can occur but are more common in children. These symptoms are referred to as 'flu-like symptoms'. Many different illnesses like the common cold, allergy symptoms, and asthma symptoms can sometimes be similar and confusing. Visit or talk with your doctor to get a proper diagnosis.

### Emergency symptoms of the flu:

Seek emergency medical help right away if you show these signs:

#### 1. In children:

- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing.
- Blue-gray color skin.
- Not drinking enough fluids.
- Not waking up; being unconscious.
- Being irritable and difficult to comfort.
- Flu-like symptoms seem to improve but return with worse fever and cough.
- Fever with a rash.

#### 2. In adults:

- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing.
- Chest or abdomen pain.
- Sudden dizziness.
- Confusion.
- Severe or persistent vomiting.

You can spread the flu before you even know you are sick: Unlike asthma, the flu is contagious. The flu spreads from coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person. You can also get the flu by touching something with the flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose. This is why preventing the flu by getting a flu shot is important.

### For more information, please contact the Allergy and Immunology Awareness Program (AIAP) at:

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