



# WHAT IS THE FLU?

## What are flu and flu-like illnesses?

Flu (influenza) is caused by the influenza virus. However, many other viruses can cause an illness similar to flu. It is often difficult to say exactly which virus is causing the illness, so doctors often diagnose a flu-like illness.

Each winter, a different type of influenza virus causes an outbreak of flu, which affects many people. This is called seasonal flu. If you get a flu-like illness during an outbreak of seasonal flu, it's likely to be caused by the prevailing influenza virus. Most cases of flu usually occur in a period of six to eight weeks during the winter.

## Many viruses can cause a flu-like illness

As mentioned, there is usually a seasonal outbreak of flu in the UK each winter.

Flu-like illnesses typically cause a high temperature (fever), aches and pains in muscles and joints, a cough and various other symptoms.

Most people recover fully, but complications such as pneumonia can sometimes develop, with potentially serious complications.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- A sudden fever: a temperature of 38C or above
- Aching body
- Feeling tired or exhausted
- Dry, chesty cough
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Difficulty sleeping
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhoea or tummy pain
- Nausea and being sick.



### How to treat the flu

- Rest and sleep
- Keep warm
- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration (your pee should be light yellow or clear).

## AVOID SPREADING THE FLU

- Wash your hands often with warm water and soap
- Use tissues to trap germs when you cough or sneeze
- Bin used tissues as quickly as possible.

If you are at increased risk of developing complications, you should have a flu jab each autumn.

## CALL NHS 111 OR SEE YOUR GP IF:

- You're worried about your baby's or child's symptoms
- You're 65 or over
- You're pregnant
- You have a long-term medical condition, e.g. diabetes or a heart, lung, kidney or neurological disease
- You have a weakened immune system, e.g. because of chemotherapy or HIV
- Your symptoms don't improve after seven days.

**Call 999 or go to A&E if you (i) develop sudden chest pain (ii) have difficulty breathing or (iii) start coughing up blood.**

Sources for newsletter: NHS, Action on Hearing Loss

# ALL ABOUT HEARING LOSS

## Hearing loss is very common

It can be very distressing, particularly if it's getting worse and especially if it affects both ears. Everyone's hearing gets worse as they get older.

However, there are many **types** of hearing loss and not all are restricted to older people.

There are also many **causes** of hearing loss.

The most common cause of hearing loss in younger people is a build-up of wax or fluid in the ear (flu ear) or otosclerosis (abnormal

bone growth inside the ear). The most common cause of hearing loss in older people is gradual age-related hearing loss in both ears.

Many people have mixed hearing loss: older people may experience hearing loss due to, e.g. earwax or otosclerosis and earwax.

Many conditions are treatable and a very few need urgent management. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns.



## GENERAL SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS

It can be hard to tell if you're losing your hearing. Other people may notice it before you do. Early signs of hearing loss include:

- Difficulty hearing other people clearly and misunderstanding what they say, especially in noisy places
  - Asking people to repeat themselves
  - Listening to music or watching TV with the volume higher than other people need
  - Difficulty hearing on the phone
  - Finding it hard to keep up with a conversation
  - Feeling tired or stressed from having to concentrate while listening.
- These problems are often caused by hearing loss that can happen as you get older. This is permanent, but treatments such as hearing aids can help.

## PROTECTING YOUR HEARING

Avoid exposure to very loud noise completely and limit the amount of time you are exposed to loud noise. If you work in a noisy environment, your employer will provide you with appropriate hearing protection, information, instruction and training as well as health surveillance, if necessary.

## HELP FOR HEARING

- Behind-the-ear hearing aids (the most common type): hearing aids that go around the top and back of the ear
  - In-the-ear hearing aids: small hearing aids that fit in the opening of the ear
  - On-the-canal hearing aids: very small hearing aids that fit a bit further into the opening of the ear, so they're just visible
  - Hearing implants: for some people, hearing aids don't help and instead, they need to have a special device fitted inside or onto their skull during an operation.
- Common types of implant include bone anchored hearing aids, cochlear implants, auditory brainstem implants and middle ear implants. Lip reading/sign language is also useful for very deaf people.