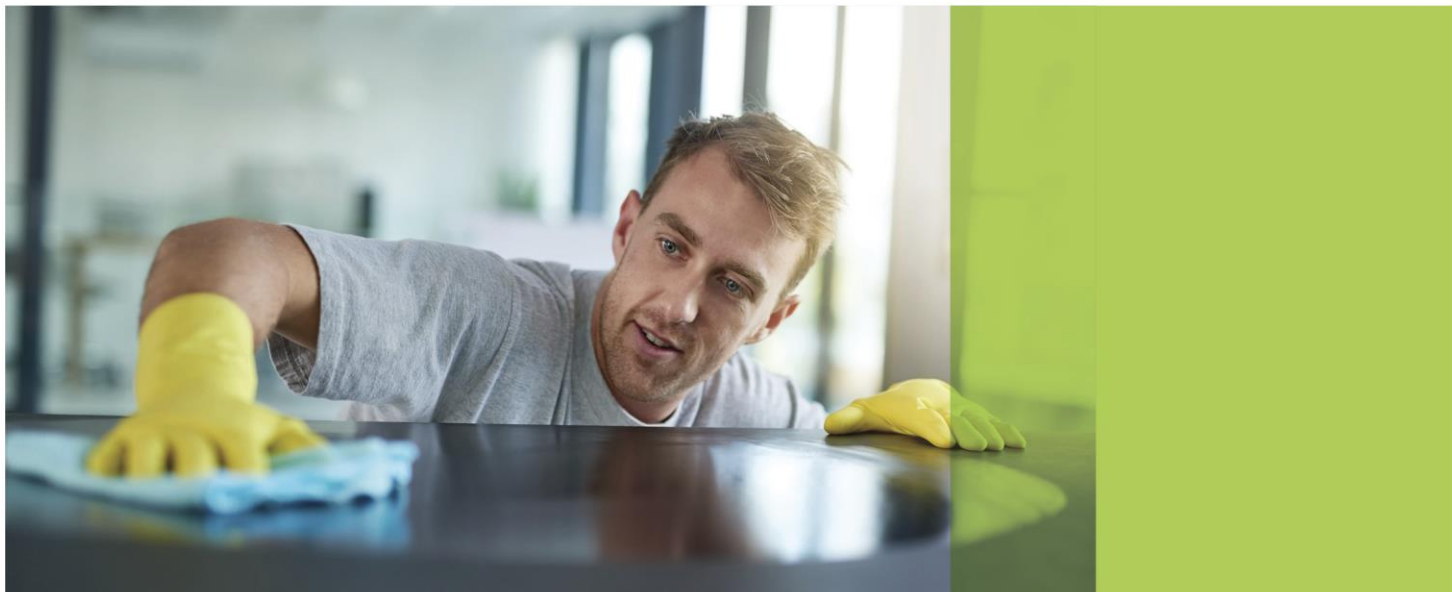


When and why the flu spreads so fast



The flu not only hits hard, it spreads fast. Understanding when and why the flu spreads can help you protect against it.

Cold temperatures

Scientists have found that in cold temperatures, such as during the winter months, the flu virus forms a hard coating that acts like an envelope, helping the virus spread through the cold air and then melt inside our bodies.¹ Researchers compare this infection process to an M&M candy in your mouth.¹ The protective covering of the flu virus melts when it enters your respiratory tract; it's only in this melted phase that the virus is capable of entering and infecting the cells in your body.¹

It is hypothesized that in warm weather, the flu virus does not form the hard coating and loses its ability to spread from person to person. Thus, as the weather warms in the spring, the flu viruses weaken, and the flu season wanes.¹

Not knowing you're sick

Most healthy adults can spread the flu virus to others a day before their symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer period of time.²

1. Ambati SK, "Role of temperature in influenza outbreaks," International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health, August, 2020
2. World Health Organization, "Influenza (Seasonal): Fact sheet," November 2018

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