



What diagnostic tests are available?

To identify infection with influenza viruses, the following testing options are available if you develop the typical symptoms:

- Influenza A/B rapid test from a nose/throat swab or nasal secretions
- Direct detection of the virus from a nose/throat swab by PCR
- Detection of antibodies in the blood. This method is not suitable for acute diagnosis, as antibodies usually only become detectable after 10–14 days.

PCR is the notable and recommended testing method and represents the gold standard in terms of sensitivity and specificity.

Is there a treatment?

Uncomplicated influenza without pre-existing underlying conditions is treated symptomatically.

Patients with underlying conditions and/or risk factors should consult their physician early on at the onset of symptoms (within the first 2 days) to initiate possible antiviral therapy.

Often, the damage to the respiratory tract leads to a secondary infection (bacterial superinfection). This can significantly worsen the course of the disease. Antibiotic therapy is then necessary.

Please note: children and adolescents must not be given aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid - ASA) for a viral infection with a temperature.

For statutory health insurance holders:

Some medical services cannot be covered by health insurance companies or cannot be covered in every case (e.g. at the patient's own request) and must therefore be paid by the patient.

Please refer to the order form for individual healthcare services for the current prices.

For private health insurance holders:

Private health insurance will cover the costs according to the valid GOÄ if there has been no previous exclusion of benefits. If you have any questions about this, your doctor will be happy to advise you.



IMD Institut für Medizinische Diagnostik Berlin-Potsdam GbR
IMD Berlin MVZ

Nicolaistraße 22
12247 Berlin (Steglitz)
Tel +49 30 77001-322
Fax +49 30 77001-332
info@imd-berlin.de · IMD-Berlin.de

ENG-FL_058_03

Fotos: ©fotolia, ©adobe stock, IMD Berlin



Flu

More than just a stuffy nose!



What is influenza?

Influenza („genuine“ flu) is an acute respiratory illness. It is a serious, sometimes life-threatening illness and is caused by influenza viruses.

For humans, the most dangerous strains are influenza A and B viruses. Influenza A viruses are further divided into different subtypes based on their surface structures. Influenza B viruses are assigned to two genetically distinct lineages, and there is no division into subtypes.

In Germany, seasonal flu waves occur in the cold season, usually after the beginning of January.

What symptoms can occur?

After a brief incubation period averaging 1–2 days, the disease typically starts **suddenly** (within just a few hours) with fever ($\geq 38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$), a **sore throat** and **dry cough**, accompanied by **muscle and limb pain**, **backache** or **headache**.

Other potential symptoms are nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, as well as general weakness and sweating. The illness usually lasts a week.

The most common complication is pneumonia. Middle ear infections can also develop in children. Rarely, inflammation of the brain or heart muscle can occur.

Severe illness and even fatal outcomes can occur especially in elderly people and **people with underlying diseases** (such as heart disease, diabetes mellitus, etc.). **Pregnancy**, especially at an advanced stage, increases the risk of a severe outcome.

How is flu spread?

Transmission of the viruses occurs mainly through droplet infection (especially through coughing and sneezing), but also by touching your mouth, nose, or eyes with contaminated hands or surfaces.

Sufferers can be contagious as early as the day before symptoms begin and up to a week after the first symptoms appear. Children or people with weakened immune systems can also shed the virus for longer.

Influenza viruses are constantly changing, often forming new variants. These changes mean you can become infected with flu viruses more often over the course of your life. That's why the flu vaccine is also updated almost every year.

How can I protect myself?

The best protection against the flu is **vaccination**, which should be given annually before the start of the flu season, ideally in October and November.

For many years, a well-tolerated flu vaccine has been available that offers reliable protection against illness. Local irritation around the injection site (redness, swelling or pressure pain) may occur for a few days and is a normal sign of a successful immune response. Fatigue and slight temperature increases are also possible side effects. For children aged 2 to 17, an attenuated live vaccine is also available as a nasal spray.

If you have a proven severe allergy to chicken egg white, you should not get vaccinated. Please ask your doctor for advice in advance.

By vaccinating in pregnancy, antibodies are passed on to the unborn child. This protects the baby in the first months of life.

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends the following persons be vaccinated against influenza, which is covered by health insurance companies:

- Persons with increased health risk due to an underlying condition (e.g. metabolic disease, heart disease, immune deficiency, etc.)
- Pregnant women (from the second trimester; in case of increased health risk due to an underlying medical condition from the first trimester)
- Persons ≥ 60 years old
- Residents of retirement homes and nursing homes, medical and nursing staff

Hygiene:

- Wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face
- Cough hygienically, e.g. into your elbow, not into your hand
- Stay at home while you are ill
- Protect family members by avoiding physical contact
- Regularly ventilate closed rooms
- In the event of a pandemic: keep your distance, avoid crowds, refrain from shaking hands and wear face masks if appropriate

