



Influenza ("flu") is a contagious disease that spreads around the United States every winter, usually between October and May. Flu is caused by influenza viruses, and is spread mainly by coughing, sneezing, and close contact. Anyone can get flu, but the risk of getting flu is highest among children. Symptoms come on suddenly and may last several days. They can include:

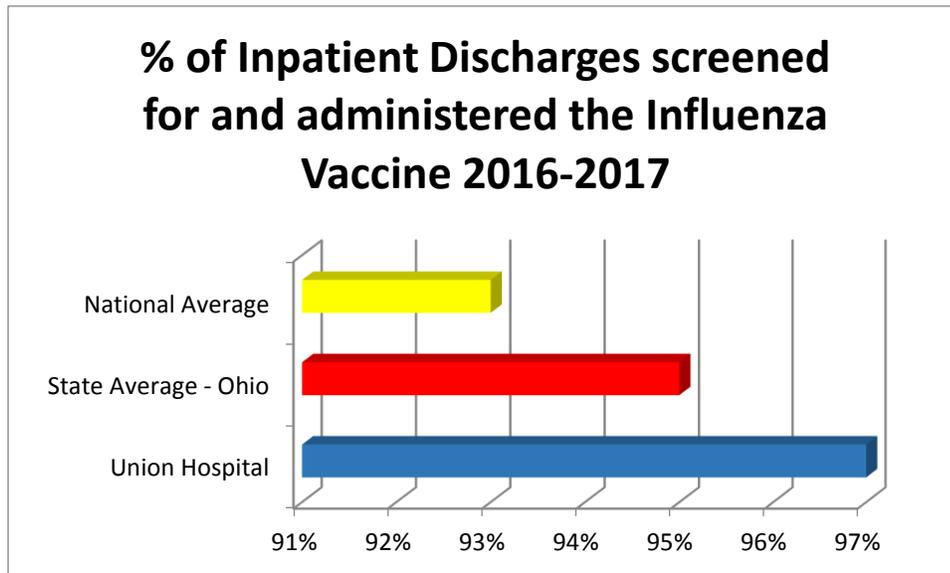
- fever/chills
- sore throat
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- cough
- headache
- runny or stuffy nose

Flu can make some people much sicker than others. These people include young children, people 65 and older, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions – such as heart, lung or kidney disease, nervous system disorders, or a weakened immune system. Flu vaccination is especially important for these people, and anyone in close contact with them.

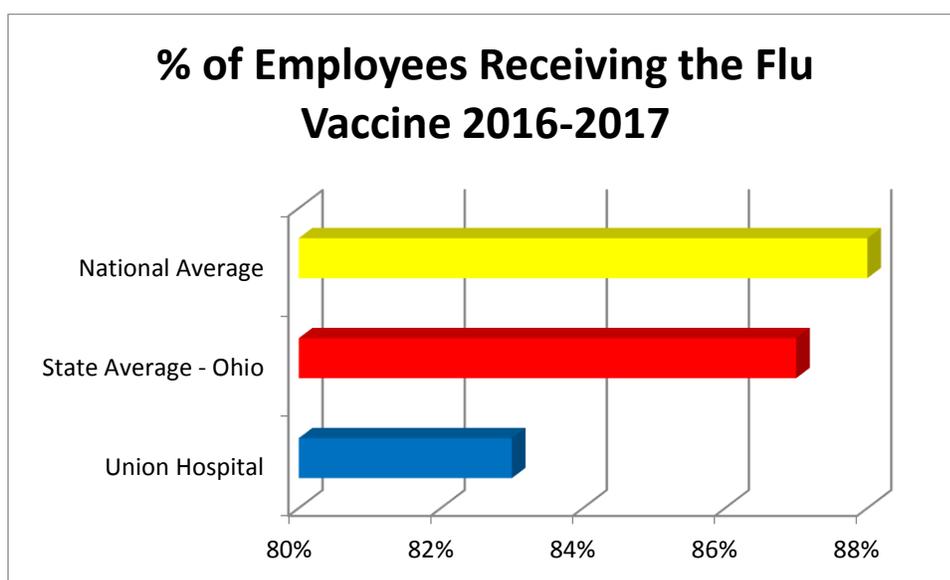
Flu can also lead to pneumonia, and make existing medical conditions worse. It can cause diarrhea and seizures in children. Each year thousands of people in the United States die from flu, and many more are hospitalized.

Flu vaccine is the best protection against flu and its complications. Flu vaccine also helps prevent spreading flu from person to person. When a person is hospitalized October - March, it is a good opportunity to ask if they have had the flu vaccine and administer it if they would like to have it.

Hospitals and other healthcare providers should encourage patients to get the flu vaccine. During the 2016-2017 flu season, Union hospital screened and vaccinated 97% of patients discharged from the hospital for the flu. The graph below illustrates our performance compared with state and national averages:



Due to the high risk of exposure and transmission in the jobs they perform, it is recommended that healthcare workers are vaccinated annually. The CDC recommends that hospitals provide influenza vaccine to healthcare workers free of charge and encourage acceptance of the vaccine to prevent transmission of the flu. During the 2016-2017 flu season, 83% of Union Hospital employees were vaccinated against influenza. We strive to improve this number every year by encouraging all employees to be vaccinated. The Graph below illustrates the percentage of Union Hospital employees vaccinated to state and national averages:



Encouraging vaccination among our employees and patients helps control the spread of the flu in our community.