

## The Flu

Influenza is a very infectious disease that usually begins in November or December, and has the most sufferers between from January through March. It often starts out resembling the common cold, but can get much more serious very quickly.

Symptoms of influenza include difficulty breathing, vomiting, and sustained diarrhea. Children will often look very pale or grey-faced. If adults have high body temperatures for three days or more in a row, going to the hospital is strongly recommended.

If you or your child catches the flu, stay hydrated; drink lots of fluids. Staying home from work or school and resting is a good idea. Don't go out if it can be avoided, and wear a mask. It is also smart to visit a hospital and get treatment sooner rather than later.

Influenza vaccines are not 100% effective, but it can help mitigate the worst effects. It is thought that getting a flu shot between October and November is more effective in building up flu immunity than at a later date. The vaccine costs between ¥2000 and ¥4000 per shot and is not covered by health insurance.

In 2009, a new influenza virus, called *shingata influenza*, created quite a stir. As this virus is still around, those who wish to be inoculated against this virus as well as the seasonal flu virus can request that particular flu shot. Please consult with your physician.

To avoid catching the flu, get a flu shot before the season begins, wash your hands often, eat healthy food, get plenty of rest, try to maintain room humidity of 50-60%, and wear a mask when you go outdoors.