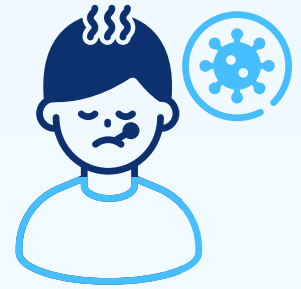








# CHRONIC ILLNESS AND COLD/FLU SEASON









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Catching a cold or the flu is never fun for anyone. For those with chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, obesity, or inflammatory disease, catching a cold or the flu can lead to severe complications, hospitalization, or even death. According to the CDC, 9 out of 10 people who were hospitalized for the flu in recent years have had at least 1 chronic health condition. American Diabetes Association reports that a third of those hospitalized for flu had diabetes. Per the American Heart Association's chief medical office, if you have heart disease and aren't vaccinated against flu, you are 6 times more likely to have a heart attack within 1 week of flu infection.




**While each of these chronic conditions has specific complications, there are some complications that all chronic conditions are vulnerable to. They include:**

-  Airway restrictions (asthma attack)
-  Bronchitis
-  Pneumonia
-  Increased risk of heart attack or stroke
-  For diabetics: high blood sugar from being sick and/or low blood sugar from not eating
-  Swelling of organs, including the heart, brain, or muscles, which can lead to organ failure

**How do you minimize the risk of complications?**

-  Get your flu shot! For those over 65, there is a flu vaccine made specifically for older people
-  Avoid crowded places
-  Wash your hands frequently
-  Don't touch your face unless you have washed your hands well
-  Wear a mask in public during the cold and flu season to minimize exposure
-  Treat your chronic condition by following your doctor's orders and taking medications

**For more information about specific chronic conditions visit:**

-  Lung Diseases: <https://www.lung.org/>
-  Heart Diseases: <https://www.heart.org/>
-  Diabetes: <https://diabetes.org/>

**SOURCES:**

- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm>
- <https://diabetes.org/newsroom/press-releases/2023/most-people-hospitalized-with-flu-have-chronic-illness>
- <https://influenzahub.com/articles/chronic-diseases/why-the-flu-is-serious-when-you-have-a-chronic-illness/>