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

**Cold temperatures**

Scientists have found that in cold temperatures, 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

**Not knowing you’re sick**

Most healthy adults can spread the flu virus to others a day before their symptoms develop and up to 7 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