



Central Michigan District Health Department
“Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”

For more information, call your local CMDHD branch office:

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www.cmdhd.org

SEASONAL INFLUENZA (FLU)

What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease that can be prevented or minimized by immunization. It is **not** the “stomach flu.” It is caused by a virus that attacks the nose, throat, and lungs.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Influenza symptoms come quickly in the form of sore throat, headache, fever, extreme tiredness, dry cough, nasal congestion, and body aches. These symptoms can be severe enough to put you in bed for a number of days. Influenza can be spread from person to person through the air as people cough or sneeze.

How is the flu different from a cold?

A cold generally stays up in the head while the flu brings body aches, fever, chills, runny nose, and extreme fatigue. A person with a cold will usually keep up his or her normal activities. A person with the flu will often feel too sick to go about their normal day-to-day routine.

Who should get a seasonal flu shot this 2011-2012 season?

- All people **6 months of age and older** should get flu vaccine.
- People who are at a higher risk of severe influenza and their close contacts
- Healthcare personnel
- Close contacts of children younger than 6 months.

What can you do to protect yourself and others?

- **Stay at home from school or work if you have a respiratory infection.**
- Avoid exposing yourself to others who are sick with a flu-like illness.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue whenever you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue away.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Clean your hands often – with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer.
- If you have an infant, don't expose him or her unnecessarily to large crowds when influenza is in your community. Avoid close contact (holding, kissing) of the baby with family members who may have influenza (fever, muscle aches, runny nose, and cough) or other respiratory infections.
- Do not share anything that goes into the mouth such as drinking cups and straws.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door knob, refrigerator handle, phone, water faucets) if someone in the house has a cold or flu.
- Do not smoke.
- Get at least eight hours of sleep a night.

What If You Think You or Your Child Has the Flu?

- **Stay at home if you are ill and encourage others to do so as well.**
- Rest and drink lots of fluids. This will help your body recover from the infection.
- Antibiotics will not help a person recover from the flu, because flu is caused by a virus, not by bacteria. Anti-viral medicine is an option for some, but not all.
- Call your doctor or clinic about what to do if you are concerned.
- Follow your child's doctor's instructions about keeping their fever under control.
- Take your child to the doctor or the emergency room if he or she:
 - Is breathing rapidly or with difficulty
 - Has bluish skin color
 - Is not drinking enough and becomes dehydrated
 - Is not waking up or interacting with others
 - Is so irritable that he or she doesn't want to be held
 - Gets better only to become sick again, with fever and a more severe cough
- If you are concerned that something does not seem right with your child, call your health care provider.

What about anti-viral medicines?

Anti-viral medicines can benefit some individuals in some situations, but there are risks in taking them and serious side effects for some people.

Anti-virals are more often used to help contain influenza outbreaks in settings such as nursing homes or to protect a high-risk person who is in direct contact with someone who has influenza.

You must take anti-virals within two days of being exposed to influenza for them to prevent the disease. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions.

Will the seasonal flu shot protect me from H1N1 flu?

This year's seasonal flu shot includes protection against the 2009 H1N1 flu and two other flu viruses. The shot **will not** give you the flu. For more information on flu, log onto www.cmdhd.org, www.michigan.gov/flu, or www.cdc.gov/flu.