

Fact Sheet: Seasonal Influenza

What is Influenza?

Influenza, also known as the seasonal flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear within 2-4 days after being infected and may include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue

Symptoms usually resolve in 5-7 days. Most people who get the flu recover completely in one to two weeks, but some people develop serious medical complications, such as pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections.

Treatment

Those who have the flu should do the following:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Take non-aspirin medication for fever and body aches
- If your symptoms become severe consult your health care professional

How is it spread?

Viruses that cause the flu are spread by direct contact with respiratory droplets spread by coughing and sneezing. Flu viruses enter the body when droplets land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick.

Prevention

The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. **Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine each year.** The vaccine will boost the immune system's ability to fight various flu viruses. There is also a flu vaccine available as a nasal spray.

- Flu vaccines will not protect against flu-like illnesses caused by non-influenza viruses. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three influenza viruses that research suggests will be most common.

In addition to getting the vaccine, people should:

- Cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash their hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing, and handling used tissues.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.
- After contact with a person who is sick, wash your hands, and keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Boost your immune system by eating a healthy diet, and getting regular physical activity and plenty of rest.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

Ingham County Health Department 5303 S. Cedar St. Lansing, MI 48911

Updated: April 2016