

## **FLU FACTS**

### **The flu...**

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year. Some people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at higher risk for serious flu complications.

### **Symptoms of Flu**

Symptoms of flu include sudden onset of: fever (usually high), body aches, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose. Stomach symptoms such as nausea and vomiting can also occur but are less common.

### **Complications of Flu**

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, or diabetes.

### **How Flu Spreads**

Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. A person who is ill with the flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick.

### **Good Health Habits for Prevention**

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. There also are flu antiviral drugs that can be used to treat and prevent the flu.

### **Use of Antiviral Drugs for Treatment**

For treatment, influenza antiviral drugs should be started within 2 days after becoming sick and taken for 5 days. When used this way, these drugs can reduce flu symptoms and shorten the time you are sick by 1 or 2 days. They also may make you less contagious to other people.

## **Use of Antiviral Drugs for Prevention**

Influenza antiviral drugs can also be used to prevent influenza when they are given to a person who is not ill, but who has been or may be near a person with influenza. When used to prevent the flu, antiviral drugs are about 70% to 90% effective. It's important to remember that flu antiviral drugs are not a substitute for getting a flu vaccine. A flu vaccine may be recommended at the same time that you are given the antiviral drugs.

### **What to do if you have the flu?**

1. Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
2. Stay home when you are sick. If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness. You should stay home until your temperature has been below 100o for a 24-hour period.
3. Cover your mouth and nose. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Throw away the tissue after you use it.
4. Clean your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
6. Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, drink plenty of fluids. Avoid using alcohol and tobacco.
7. Over the counter medications: Tylenol or Advil (not aspirin) can be taken to reduce fever or for sore throat or body aches, cough syrups, decongestants, saline gargles and throat lozenges.

For more information go to: The Center for Disease control website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>