



INFLUENZA FACT SHEET

What is influenza?

Influenza (commonly called the “flu”) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Every year in the United States more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 people die from the flu. The elderly, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Influenza can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu usually begins suddenly and can include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults

If you develop flu-like symptoms, especially if you are at high risk for complications of the flu, consult your healthcare provider.

How can you be exposed to influenza?

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. Flu viruses spread from person to person mainly when infected people cough or sneeze. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touch their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 days **after** becoming sick. **That means you may be able to pass the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.**

What is the treatment for influenza?

There are effective treatments for the flu such as antiviral drugs and over-the-counter medications that may help reduce the discomfort of the flu. It is important to consult your healthcare provider for the best treatment plan for you.

If you get the flu:

- Stay home and avoid close contact with others
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Get lots of rest
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco
- Wash your hands often to avoid germs

What can be done to prevent the spread of influenza?

The single best way to prevent influenza is to get a flu shot every year. Also, practicing good health habits such as covering your cough and washing your hands often can help prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

Where can I get more information?

www.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Rev. June 2016