

Information You Should Know

THE FLU

THE FLU is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. The flu is not the same as a cold although they share many of the same symptoms. The cold is caused by a different virus and it tends to have milder symptoms. Colds are also less likely to cause serious complications.

SYMPTOMS

Flu symptoms can include any or all of the following:

- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Body aches
- Runny nose and/or congestion
- Fatigue

Symptoms can come on rapidly within three to six hours. People with the flu usually have a fever for two to five days. This is different than fever caused by other upper respiratory viruses which usually resolve after 24-48 hours.

COMPLICATIONS

Every year, complications of the flu require more than 200,000 people in the United States to be hospitalized. Pneumonia is the most common complication. Pneumonia is a serious infection of the lungs and is more likely to occur in young children, people over the age of 65, and those with other illnesses such as diabetes or conditions affecting the heart or lungs.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Most people recover within one to two weeks without treatment. However, call your doctor immediately if:

- You feel short of breath or have trouble breathing
- You have pain or pressure in your chest or stomach
- You have signs of being dehydrated, such as dizziness when standing or not passing urine
- You feel confused

In children you should seek help if the child has any of the above or if the child:

- Has blue or purplish skin color
- Is so irritable that he or she does not want to be held
- Does not have tears when crying
- Has a fever with a rash
- Does not wake up easily



THE FLU

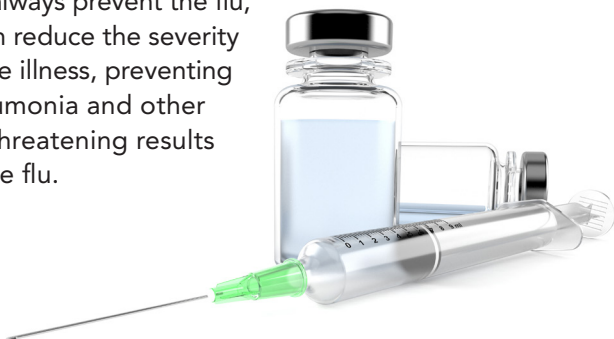
PREVENTION

Proper hygiene and health practices are the best defense.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and hot water
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not accessible
- Avoid touching your face
- Cough or sneeze into the bend of the elbow
- Properly dispose of used tissues
- Avoid people with respiratory illness
- Stay home when sick
- Seek care on the onset of flu-like symptoms
- Eat a balanced diet and get enough sleep

TREATMENT

- Rest until the flu is fully resolved, especially if the illness has been severe.
- Drink enough fluids so that you do not become dehydrated.
- Acetaminophens such as Tylenol can relieve fever, headache and muscle aches.
- Antiviral medicines can be used to treat or prevent the flu. Not every person with influenza needs an antiviral medicine but some do. If you are severely ill and/or have risk factors for developing complications you will need an antiviral agent.
- Vaccine – experts recommend the vaccine for everyone over six months of age. Even if it does not always prevent the flu, it can reduce the severity of the illness, preventing pneumonia and other life threatening results of the flu.



THE NEXT STEP

It is important that organizations prepare for a possible influenza pandemic. Adequate preparation will give your organization the best chance of continuing to operate and reduce the risk to your employee's health and safety.

1. Identify a workplace coordinator - this person would be the single point of contact for all issues relating to a flu outbreak.
2. Examine policies for leave, working from home and employee compensation - refresh yourself and your employees about what your company's health care plans cover in the event of sick leave as a result of the flu.
3. Post signs or host a flu vaccination clinic for employees – the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides free posters
4. Identify essential employees, essential business functions, and other critical inputs.
5. Share your flu and other pandemic plans with employees and clearly communicate expectations.
6. Prepare business continuity plans - absenteeism or other work place changes need to be addressed so you can maintain business operations.
7. Establish an emergency communication plan.

The focus of business continuity planning and management should be to reduce exposure, proactive mitigation techniques, communication, minimize peaks of absenteeism, and plan for any possible recurrence of flu.

LINKS OF INTEREST

www.cdc.gov Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.who.int World Health Organization