

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST THE 'FLU'?

The best protection against the 'flu' is to get the seasonal 'flu' vaccination.

Influenza, commonly called 'flu', is a contagious illness caused by viruses that are spread from infected persons when they cough or sneeze. The 'flu' virus is also spread by touching something that has been soiled with the virus, then touching your eyes, mouth or nose. The virus can live on flat surfaces like tabletops for up to 8 hours. Health-care workers can be a source of transmission to patients and must provide protection to persons at risk for complications from 'flu'. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) state that the most effective strategy for preventing seasonal 'flu' is by vaccination. The CDC strongly recommends the seasonal 'flu' vaccination for health-care workers.

Common 'flu' symptoms include:

Fever	Body aches	Runny or stuffy nose	Fatigue / tiredness	Headache
Diarrhea and vomiting (common in children)		Sore throat	Cough	

Seasonal 'flu' can cause mild to severe illness. Most healthy people will recover from the illness without complications. Complications that include a severe respiratory illness called pneumonia, dehydration, worsening of a person's current health conditions including congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes, sinus problems and ear infections. Adults can infect others one day before the symptoms start and continue for up to five days after becoming ill. It is possible to give someone the 'flu' before your symptoms appear and while you are ill.

People who are at high risk of complications from seasonal 'flu' include:

- People 65 years or older
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic medical conditions, like asthma, diabetes or heart disease
- Young children

Steps that you can take to prevent the spread of the 'flu' include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home from work, school & do not run errands when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, if a tissue is not available cover your nose and mouth while you cough or sneeze by placing the inside of your elbow up to your face to prevent spread of the virus.
- Wash your hands often, use wipes or hand gels that prevent the spread of illness after proper disposal of used tissues & after touching flat surfaces like tabletops that are potentially infected with the virus.

Get emergency care if you have the following symptoms:

In Children:

- Fast breathing / trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up / interacting
- Irritability
- Fever with rash
- 'Flu' symptoms improve then worsen

In Adults:

- Difficulty breathing / shortness of breath
- Chest / abdominal pain or pressure
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

The seasonal 'flu' vaccine is unlikely to protect against the novel H1N1 'flu'. A novel H1N1 'flu' vaccine is in current production and testing phases and will be available later in the year. This new vaccine is not intended to replace the current seasonal 'flu' vaccine; it is intended to be used along side the current seasonal 'flu' vaccine. Certain at risk groups will be prioritized to receive the novel H1N1 'flu' vaccine when it is available.

For more information regarding seasonal 'flu' or new H1N1 'flu' contact:

- University Health Services @ 312-996-7420
- Infection control @ 312-996-8953
- CDC web site: www.cdc.gov/flu
- The Wellness Center web site: www.wellctr.uic.edu