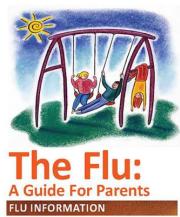
In flu season, knowledge & actions can make a difference

By Jo Stepp, Dunham Community Health Nurse, with Public Affairs Staff 19 February 2018



What is the flu?

Influenza (the flu) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. There are many different influenza viruses that are constantly changing. Flu viruses cause illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States each year.

The flu can be very dangerous for children. Each year

about 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized from flu complications, like pneumonia.

How serious is the flu?

Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. While the flu can be serious even in people who are otherwise healthy, it can be especially dangerous for young children and children of any age who have certain long-term health conditions, including asthma (even mild or controlled), neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorders, endocrine disorders (such as diabetes), kidney, liver, and metabolic disorders, and weakened immune systems due to disease or medication.



Children with these conditions and children who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy can have severe illness from the flu.

How does the flu spread?

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get the flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eves or nose

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of the flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Some people with the flu will not

How long can a sick person spread the flu to others? People with the flu may be able to infect others by

shedding virus from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. However, children and people with weakened immune systems can shed virus for longer, and may be still contagious past 5 to 7 days of flu illness, especially if they still have symptoms

PROTECT YOUR CHILD

How can I protect my child against the flu? To protect against the flu, the first and most imp thing you can do is to get a flu vaccine for yourself and your child.

- Vaccination is recommended for everyone ٠ 6 months and older.
- . It's especially important that young children and children with long term health conditions get vaccinated. (See list of conditions in "How serious is the flu?")
- Caregivers of children with health conditions or of children younger than 6 months old should get vaccinated. (Babies younger than 6 months are too young to be vaccinated themselves.)
- Another way to protect babies is to vaccinate pregnant women. Research shows that flu vaccination gives some protection to the baby both while the woman is pregnant and for up to 6 months after the baby is born

Flu vaccine is updated annually to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the upcoming flu season. Flu vaccines are made using strict safety and production measures. Over the years, millions of flu vaccines have been given in the United States with a very good safety record.

Some things don't change. The best way to protect against the flu and other illnesses is simply good hand-washing: a good scrubbing that lasts at least 20 seconds.

In your workplace and at home, frequently sanitize commonly touched areas such as light switches, door handles, computer keyboards/mouse, phones, commode handles and faucets.

Despite a committed work ethic, people who are feeling ill should minimize germ transmission to co-workers and fellow students. The Center for Disease Control & Prevention, CDC, recommends staying home from work or school for at least 24 hours after a fever is gone without the use of a fever reducing medicine. Rest and good nutrition will help to build strength and provide your immune system to fight the next germs you encounter.

It's not too late to get a flu shot. The CDC recommends everyone over the age of 6 months should receive a yearly flu vaccine.

At Dunham, beneficiaries receive a flu shot on a walk-in basis, by checking in at the Reception Desk. Hours: http://dunham.narmc.amedd.army.mil/HealthcareServices/SitePages/Allergy%20and%20Immunization.aspx

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease

Flu season is not officially over until May.

The U.S. Dunham Army Health Clinic had fewer than 20 positive flu results in the month of January. Most of these positive results were Influenza A.

You can track Pennsylvania cases at

--http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/I-L/Pages/20172018-Influenza-Season.aspx#.WoIMS8IOmr

Nationwide, CDC reports a rate of 51.4 flu cases per 100,000 people. Widespread flu activity has been reported in 49 of 50 states and Puerto Rico during the current flu season.

How do you know that it's flu?

Traditionally, high fevers are the telltale sign of influenza versus other viral or bacterial infections.

Other common symptoms include fatigue, chills, headaches, achiness, sinus congestion, coughs, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

Patients with severe flu symptoms should be seen by a provider. Since influenza is a virus, providers are able to treat the symptoms, only, as a rule. Sometimes if providers see patients at the onset of symptoms, they may order antiviral drugs, such as Tamiflu, that are designed to lessen the duration of the flu by one or two days and possibly reduce the severity of the symptoms.

According to the CDC, flu illness can vary from mild to severe. While the flu can be serious even in people who are otherwise healthy, i can be especially dangerous for young children and children of any age with certain long-term health conditions, including asthma (eve mild or controlled), neurological and neuro-developmental conditions, chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorders, endocrine disorders (such as diabetes), kidney, liver, and metabolic disorders, and weakened immune systems due to disease or medication.

Be cautious in selecting legitimate online medical advice, e.g., the CDC site offers real-time data about flu activity and recommends prevention, diagnosis, and treatment measures, at <u>https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm</u>.





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