

## INFLUENZA FACTS

Influenza is nothing new. Epidemics are recorded as far back as ancient Greece.

- Anyone can get influenza, but it is usually most severe in the very old, the very young, and those with chronic illness - especially respiratory problems.
- Influenza is a virus and is very contagious. It spreads via droplets from an infected person's coughing or sneezing.
- Although it is less likely, you can get the flu by touching a door-knob or using a telephone or other infected surface.
- Typically, flu season ranges from October through March, with January and February as the peak months.
- Each year, 5-20 percent of people in the U.S. get the flu.
- Annually, 200,000 people are hospitalized with the flu, while on average, some 36,000 people die from the flu or flu-related complications.
- Influenza can often lead to the development of pneumonia.
- People with the flu are often contagious 24 hours prior to the time they begin showing symptoms, and for up to five days after symptoms set in.
- Influenza strains typically begin in birds or swine, then mutate to infect humans. In humans the virus mutates so it can pass from person to person.
- Because it is a virus, antibiotics do not work on the flu. However, physicians often recommend antiviral medications.

Also available in the personal and family preparedness series is:

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A Guide to Preparedness

**Pamphlet:**

A Personal and Family Preparedness Plan

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Preparing a First Aid and Supply Kit

Bird Flu: What You Should Know

Influenza and You

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This brochure is a publication of the  
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# Influenza and You



*Courtesy of the*



## AVOIDING INFLUENZA

Although no method is 100-percent effective in protecting you from the flu, there are a number of things you can do to lessen your risk of illness.

- Eat right: A healthy diet that includes five servings of fruits and vegetables a day will make your body stronger and better able to fend off viruses.
- Exercise: Physical activity builds the body's strength and ability to fight influenza.
- Stress: Stress weakens the body and makes it susceptible to illness and influenza.
- Rest: A well rested body is stronger and more able to fight off illness. At least eight hours a night is recommended for most people.
- Especially during flu season you should wash your hands frequently - especially after touching something that others have touched (door knobs, computer keyboards) or shaking hands.
- Your hands carry germs so do not touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth. Those areas allow germs and viruses easy entry into our systems.
- If you are worried about getting the flu, try to avoid crowds or crowded public places.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Don't eat or drink after someone else and don't share eating utensils.
- Get vaccinated.
- Avoid spreading germs by covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

## SYMPTOMS

- Fever (usually a high fever)
- Headache
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches (body aches)
- Runny nose or stuffy nose
- Influenza can also cause symptoms often identified as the "stomach flu." These include: nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. These symptoms are often more common in children than adults.

## THE VACCINE

- Because it uses a "killed" or "inactive" virus, the vaccine cannot cause you to get the flu, and side effects are limited. There may be some soreness or a low-grade fever.
- People with allergies to eggs should not get the vaccine.
- It takes about two weeks for the vaccine to work, and antibodies to build up.
- People who are vaccinated still may get the flu, but it would probably be less severe than if there had been no vaccine taken at all.
- A vaccination can offer up to six months of protection.
- The nasal mist vaccine uses a live - but weakened - virus and should not be taken by anyone with health issues that weaken the immune system.
- There are guidelines for who can be vaccinated.

## FLU SHOT PRIORITY

The government sets priorities on who can first receive the flu shot.

*(Ross County Health District guidelines)*

- Persons 65 years and older.
- Children 6-23 months of age.
- Persons aged 2-64 years, with chronic illness, such as asthma, diabetes and heart problems.
- Pregnant women.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Others who should consider being vaccinated when the vaccine is made available to them.

- Health care workers.
- Child care workers and providers.
- Persons who live with or are in close contact with someone who is high risk.

## TREATMENT

There is no cure for the flu, but symptoms may be lessened.

- Get lots of rest and drink plenty of liquids.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco.
- Antivirals may help. For information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/antiviral.htm>