



Community Connection

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Flu Season Is Here

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Every season, there is a somewhat different strain of the flu virus. Vaccines are developed annually to target the latest strain of the bug. The influenza vaccine is the optimum method in preventing and reducing the severity of the flu.

Here Are Three Important Reasons To Take The Vaccine:

- People can be contagious for 24 hours before exhibiting any flu-like symptoms. This can lead to a false sense of security that you have not been exposed to the virus. The vaccine would protect you from contagious people.
- Scientists recently discovered that the flu virus was able to be recovered on a bank note after 15 days from contact with the germ. The vaccine protects you from objects that have been contaminated with the virus.
- Though washing your hands, and observing good hygiene habits may reduce the risk of exposure, the flu virus mutates from year to year. With yearly vaccinations, a person can build up considerable immunity to a whole range of flu strains, strengthening the body's ability to fight off the flu.

Flu Symptoms

Influenza is a respiratory infection caused by viruses. Some of the symptoms are similar to a cold, and it can sometimes be difficult to tell if you have the flu or a very bad cold. If you have the flu, you will have a sudden headache, dry cough, and you might have a runny nose and a sore throat. Your muscles will ache, you will be very tired, and you can have a fever up to 104°F (40°C). Most people feel better in a couple of days, but the tiredness and cough can last for two weeks or longer.

“Act As If”

“Act As If” the virus is present and circulating in public and workplace settings. Observe and practice the following guidelines to prevent the flu and reduce its spread:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick (a minimum of three feet);
- Clean things that are touched often, like door handles, desks, pens, telephones – both at work and at home;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, as germs carry easily from object to person;
- Stay home from work, school or social gatherings if you are sick;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing;

Influenza Vaccine

The FDA has licensed two types of influenza vaccine for use in the United States: the shot and the nasal-spray flu vaccine. The shot contains inactivated, or killed, viruses and is given with a needle in the arm. The inhaled vaccine contains live viruses that are weakened and is administered into the nose with a sprayer. On September 19, 2007 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved use of the nasal influenza vaccine LAIV (FluMist®) for healthy children ages 2-4 years old (24-59 months old) without a history of recurrent wheezing, as well as for healthy persons ages 5-49 years who are not pregnant. Previously, approval was for healthy persons ages 5-49 years who are not pregnant. More information is available at www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/nasalspray.htm