



WEEKLY ES&H TOOLBOX TALK

COMMUNICATIONS

SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

FACTOID:

Each year in the United States

- *5-20% of the population gets the flu*
- *More than 200,000 are hospitalized from flu-related complications*
- *36,000 people die from flu-related causes*



THE FLU AND YOU

What is Influenza (the flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each year. Symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms; such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, can also occur (more common in children than adults).

Older people, young children, and those with certain health conditions (asthma, diabetes, heart disease) are at high risk for serious flu complications.

How Flu Spreads

Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or touching things contaminated with flu viruses and then touching your mouth or nose. People with the flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means you may be able to pass on the flu before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What is the Swine Flu?

The Swine Flu, renamed H1N1, is a new flu virus spread in the same way as typical seasonal flu

viruses. Originally thought to have come from pigs, further study has shown that the virus is made up of 4 different genes; 2 swine flu genes, 1 human flu gene, and 1 avian flu gene. Symptoms and treatment of this virus remain the same although there is a higher rate of diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 than in typical flu viruses. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. If you contract **any type** of flu, it's important to remain at home until 24 hours after your fever is gone (without the use of fever reducing medications) and to avoid contact with other people.

CDC SAYS: "TAKE 3" STEPS TO PREVENT AND FIGHT THE FLU

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is urging everyone to take the following 3 steps to protect themselves and others from the flu:

1. Get Vaccinated

Take time to get a flu vaccine. The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

There are 2 types of flu vaccines: the "flu shot" and nasal-spray flu vaccines. The flu shot is an inactivated vaccine that is approved for use in people 6 months of age or older, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. Nasal-spray vaccines are made with live, weakened flu viruses

that do not cause the flu. They are approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. Anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, certain people should get vaccinated each year. They are:

- Children ages 6 months-19 yrs
- Pregnant women
- People 50 yrs of age and older
- People with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities.
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from the flu.



Note: A separate vaccination program is anticipated later this fall for H1N1. The 2009 seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against H1N1 flu.

2. Stop Germs

Take everyday preventive actions. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away after you use it.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

If you get the flu, stay at home from work or school and limit contact with others.

3. Antiviral Drugs

Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them. They are not a substitute for vaccination but are an important treatment option if you do get the flu.

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. They can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. Antiviral drugs work best if started within 2 days of symptom onset.

For more information about flu, visit www.cdc.gov/flu