



HOLY FAMILY
PARISH

PARISH NURSE MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2009

The Flu or Influenza

Influenza, or flu, is a respiratory infection caused by a variety of flu viruses. The most familiar aspect of the flu is the way it can “knock you off your feet” as it sweeps through entire communities. The flu differs in several ways from the common cold, a respiratory infection also caused by viruses. For example, people rarely get fevers, headaches or suffer from extreme exhaustion that flu viruses cause. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 35 to 50 million Americans come down with the flu during each flu season, which typically lasts from November to March. Children, especially those of school age, are 2-3 times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu and spread the virus to others. Adults are at greatest risk of getting infected in highly populated areas, such as crowded living and working conditions, nursing homes, and in families with school-age children who can spread the disease.

Flu is transmitted by someone around you who has the flu and coughs and sneezes without protection. You can get the flu by touching a surface such as a telephone or door knob that has been contaminated or by a touch with someone who has the flu. The viruses can pass through the air and enter your body through your nose or mouth. If you’ve touched a contaminated surface, they can pass from your hand to your nose or mouth. It is very important to cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough with a tissue or in the crook of your elbow. Do not shake hands with an infected person, and if you are a caregiver, line your trash cylinders with plastic bags and wear gloves when removing infected tissues or body fluids.

Flu Symptoms usually appear 1-4 days after being infected. You can spread the flu virus to others before your symptoms start and for another 3-4 days after your symptoms appear. The symptoms start very quickly and are headache, chills, dry cough, body aches, fever, stuffy nose, and sore throat. The fever begins to decline on the second or third day of the illness. The flu almost never causes symptoms in the stomach and intestines. The illness that some call “stomach flu” is not influenza.

The main way to keep from getting the flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine. You can get the vaccine at your doctor’s office, local clinic, Parish Nurses at Holy Family Church, some workplaces and community centers, supermarkets, and pharmacies. The inactivated (killed) vaccine is prepared 10 months before flu season begins. The newly prepared vaccine, based on the strains of flu viruses that are in circulation at the time includes those A and B viruses expected to circulate the following winter. Because the viruses are killed, they cannot cause infections. Sometimes, an unpredicted new strain may appear. Usually this new strain is milder, because the yearly vaccine still will give you some protection. There are also prescribed medicines that you should discuss with your doctor before the flu season begins, that also help to prevent flu infection.

Many people can treat the symptoms by resting in bed, drinking plenty of fluids, taking over the counter medicine. To work well, take medicines within 48 hours after the flu begins. Do not give aspirin to children and adolescents who have the flu due to the complication of Reyes Syndrome. Antibiotics do not work with the flu infection, and only work against some infections caused by bacteria.

Some complications of the flu are pneumonia that manifests with high fever, chest pain with each breath, coughing that produces thick yellow-greenish-colored mucous, and Reyes Syndrome in children who have been given aspirin. Pneumonia can be a very serious and life-threatening condition as can Reyes Syndrome in children. You should contact your doctor immediately if these side effects of the flu should occur or you have any questions. You now know some of the facts regarding flu. Compare it to see the difference between the flu and the current Swine Flu that was in the June Bulletin.

For more information, visit the Parish Nurse Bulletin Board in the LCH or visit the internet for the flu and Swine flu. There will be more information in the bulletin regarding Parish flu injections and on the bulletin Board this Fall. May God bless you all with good health and a Blessed summer, Your Parish Nurses.

*To contact the Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry, call 330.688.6412, ext. 462.
To learn more about the ministry, please visit the parish Web site at www.holyfamilystow.org.*