

Questions & Answers: 2012-2013 Flu Season

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE THE FLU?

- If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.
- You may have the flu if you have some or all of these symptoms:
 - Fever – although not everyone with the flu has a fever
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Body aches
 - Headache
 - Chills
 - Fatigue
 - Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET SICK?

- Most people with the flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.
- If, however, you have symptoms of flu and are very sick or worried about your illness, call your health care provider promptly.
- Certain people are at greater risk of serious flu-related complications including:
 - Young children;
 - Older Pennsylvanians;
 - Pregnant women; and
 - People with certain long-term medical conditions (like asthma, heart disease, etc.)
- If you are at greater risk from the flu, it's best for you to contact your health care provider and remind them about your high risk status for flu.
- Health care providers will determine whether flu testing and possible treatment are needed. They can also prescribe antiviral drugs to treat the flu. These drugs work better for treatment the sooner they are started.

WHAT ARE THE FLU EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS?

- Seek immediate medical treatment if you or your loved ones experience the following warning signs:
 - Children
 - Fast breathing or trouble breathing
 - Bluish skin color
 - Not drinking enough fluids
 - Not waking up or not interacting with others
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
 - Fever with a rash
 - Infants
 - Being unable to eat
 - Having trouble breathing
 - Having no tears when crying
 - Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal
 - Adults
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Severe or persistent vomiting
 - Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

DO I NEED TO GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IF I AM ONLY A LITTLE SICK?

- **No – the emergency room should only be used for people who are very sick.**
- You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill.
- If you have the emergency warning signs of flu sickness, you should go to the emergency room.
- If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications or you are concerned about your illness, call your health care provider for advice.
- If you go to the emergency room and you are not sick with the flu, you may catch it from people who do have it.

WHAT SHOULD I TAKE FOR THE FLU?

- You can treat flu symptoms with and without medication.

- Over-the-counter medications may relieve some flu symptoms but will not make you less contagious.
- Your health care provider may prescribe antiviral medications to make your illness milder and prevent serious complications.
- Your health care provider may also prescribe antibiotics if your flu has progressed to a bacterial infection.
- You can treat flu symptoms without medication by:
 - Getting plenty of rest.
 - Drinking clear fluids like water, broth, sports drinks or electrolyte beverages to prevent becoming dehydrated.
 - Placing a cool, damp washcloth on your forehead, arms and legs to reduce discomfort associated with a fever.
 - Putting a humidifier in your room to make breathing easier.
 - Gargling salt water to soothe a sore throat.
 - Covering up with a warm blanket to calm chills.

HOW LONG SHOULD I STAY HOME IF I AM SICK?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other things you have to do and no one else can do for you.
- Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as ibuprofen or aspirin.
- You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events and public gatherings.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHILE I'M SICK?

- Sneeze or cough into a tissue or your sleeve – not your hand.
- Keep your hands away from your face and don't touch your mouth, nose or eyes.
- Wash your hands with soap often or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep frequently used surfaces clean – like knobs, countertops and desks.
- **STAY HOME** from work or school if you get sick.
- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick, too.