

Health Tips for Flu Season

As we enter the winter season we also enter the flu season. Influenza infections occur between October and April of each year. Typical symptoms include fever, chills, muscle aches, congestion, cough, runny nose and difficulty breathing. Influenza is unique in its ability to change the proteins that reside on the surface of the virus. This is why the influenza vaccine is given every year. Each year the vaccine is specific to the strains of influenza virus that are circulating at that time. Also, other contagious diseases such as stomach flu can occur year round. Please read below for simple steps to help protect yourself and your loved ones from getting sick this season and all year.

Avoid close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Refrain from sharing drinks with an ill person.
- Stay home when you are sick. This includes running errands. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Avoid shaking hands with people especially if you know they or you are sick.

Reduce the spread of germs

- Washing your hands often with soap and water will help reduce the spread of germs. Proper hand washing includes washing for 20 seconds each time.
- If soap and water are unavailable or you have no time to wash, use an alcohol based hand cleaner. But always use soap and water when able.
- Wipe down any surfaces that may have been contaminated by saliva or other respiratory secretions. Flu viruses are known to survive on surfaces for up to 24 to 48 hours and up to 8- 12 hours on cloth, paper and tissues. Use a household disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses.
- DO NOT SHARE DRINKS with anyone.

Practice good respiratory etiquette

- Respiratory secretions are virus-containing droplets (such as spit or mucous) that are spread when infected persons cough or sneeze.
- Germs are also often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth as much as possible.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to avoid spreading your germs to others. Dispose of tissue often.
- If tissue is unavailable, cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm.