

How to Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones Against The Flu

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water or an alcohol based hand gel.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. Never cough in the direction of someone else. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Do not take young children, those with immune system problems or the chronically ill into large crowds unnecessarily when the flu is in your community.
- Do not hold, hug or kiss anyone who has a cold or the flu, especially children.
- If you have flu symptoms stay home from work or school and avoid public activities for at least 5 days (7 for children).
- Do not share items you put in your mouth like drinking cups and straws. They can spread germs and viruses.
- Clean things that are touched often at home school or work like door or refrigerator handles, phones and water faucets.

Information About The Flu and When to Seek Medical Attention

What is the flu?

The flu is a very contagious disease of the respiratory (breathing) system. The flu is easily passed from one person to another by coughing and sneezing. It is usually very unpleasant, but for most people symptoms generally get better after 7 –10 days.

The flu usually starts very **suddenly** with:

- fever (from 102° – 104°) lasting 3 – 4 days
- headache
- severe muscle aches
- general weakness/extreme fatigue

These symptoms are accompanied by:

- dry cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose

What to do if you have the flu:

- Rest in bed
- Drink lots of fluids
- Take non-aspirin pain relievers such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®, Motrin®, etc.). Never give children or teens with flu symptoms aspirin as they can develop a serious disease called Reye syndrome
- Stay home and avoid public activities until your symptoms are resolved (usually 5-7 days)
- Talk with your health care provider if you are considering prescription drugs as they can have serious side effects in some people
- For extreme cases, visit your health care provider or the emergency department as soon as possible

Note: If you are at high risk for complications from the flu you should consult your health care provider when your flu symptoms begin. Your doctor may recommend certain antiviral drugs to treat the flu.

When should you see a health care provider?

You should see a health care provider or go to an emergency room immediately if you have any of the symptoms below:

- Flu symptoms that are strong or that do not go away after 7-10 days
- Breathing that is fast, difficult or painful
- Bluish skin
- Cough with yellow mucous
- Getting sick again with fever and/or a worse cough after getting better
- Not drinking enough fluids

Parents should seek medical attention for infants and children that are:

- Not waking up; not interacting with others
- So irritable they do not want to be held

For more information about influenza visit, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/> or <http://www.mass.gov/dph> or call the Massachusetts Immunization Program at 617-983-6800 or 888-658-2850.