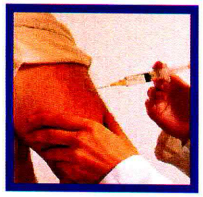
Pandemic Flu

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FLU PANDEMICS?

- Flu pandemics are caused by a new flu virus.
- People have no immunity to the new flu virus.
- The virus responsible for the pandemic may cause people to get sicker than the seasonal flu.
- A vaccine is not available during the early months of a flu pandemic.
- Flu pandemics can come in waves lasting 6-12 weeks in a given community.
- If many people in a community are sick, it may overwhelm medical care services and disrupt businesses and schools.

DOES A SEASONAL FLU SHOT PROTECT AGAINST PANDEMIC FLU?

No. Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against a new strain of the flu virus.

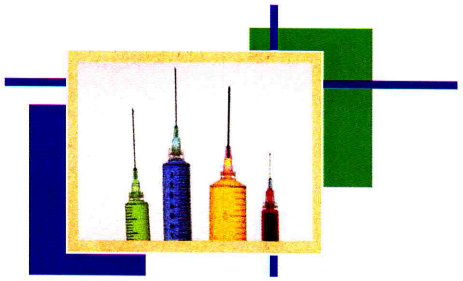


Useful Links

New Jersey Department of Health
www.nj.gov/flu
http://nj.gov/health/cd/flu/other_lan.shtml

Caring for the Flu at Home: A Self-Help Guide
www.nj.gov/health/flu/documents/flu_guide.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/flu



New Jersey Department of Health
Communicable Disease Service
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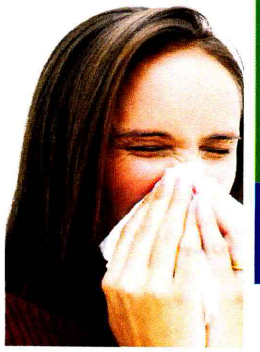
Flu Basics

What you need to know to stay healthy during flu season



General Information

WHAT IS THE FLU?

The flu, the common name for influenza, is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU?

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Body Aches
- Headache

WHO GETS THE FLU?

Anyone can get the flu. On average, in the United States, 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu each year.

WHEN DOES THE FLU OCCUR?

Flu season in the United States is usually in the fall and winter months. The peak of flu season is between October and April.

How do you catch the flu?

HOW DOES THE FLU SPREAD?

The flu virus spreads though droplets that enter the air after people cough and sneeze.

Others can breathe them in or get them on their hands and become infected when they touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

WHEN ARE PEOPLE CONTAGIOUS?

People can spread the flu up to 24 hours **before** they feel sick and for about a week after symptoms begin. That time may be longer for children.

HOW SOON DO FLU SYMPTOMS START?

Symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after the flu virus enters the body.

HOW LONG DO SYMPTOMS LAST?

People are usually sick for about one week.

Prevention

HOW CAN THE FLU BE PREVENTED?

- Get the flu vaccine
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid sick people
- Clean commonly shared or frequently touched items

WHEN SHOULD I GET THE FLU VACCINE?

You should get vaccinated as soon as vaccine is available (ideally by October-November) and as long as flu is present in the community.

DO I HAVE TO GET VACCINATED EVERY YEAR?

Yes. The seasonal flu virus is always changing, so you need to get a new vaccine each year.

AFTER I GET VACCINATED, AM I PROTECTED RIGHT AWAY?

No. It takes about two weeks for your body to be protected.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET THE FLU?

- Drink plenty of liquids
- Get plenty of rest
- Stay home from work or school
- Call your healthcare provider