Influenza Virus

“THE FLU”: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW!
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INFLUENZA VIRUS: “THE FLU”

• Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses

• People often mistake “The Flu” for a “COMMON COLD”
  • In reality, “The flu” is different from a Cold
  • A common cold is usually not as severe as the flu

• The flu can cause mild to severe illness and requires evaluation by a medical provider

• Severe cases may result in people being hospitalized and even “DEATH”
Flu Season: When does it occur?

- In the United States, “flu season” occurs in the winter
- Flu outbreaks can happen as early as October and can last as late as May
- The Centers for Disease Control says the flu season begins when certain key flu indicators rise and remain elevated for a number of consecutive weeks
- Key flu indicators include:
  - Levels of influenza-like illness present in the community
  - Hospitalization required for flu-like illnesses
  - Deaths due to the flu virus
The Flu: Who’s at Greatest Risk

• Everyone is at risk for the flu but some populations are more susceptible than others
• Older people, young children, immunocompromised (those at risk for infection) & chronically ill people are at greatest risk

*All children aged 6 through 59 months; *All persons aged 50 years or older
• Adults and children who have:
  • Chronic pulmonary conditions (including asthma)
  • Cardiovascular conditions with the exception of isolated hypertension
  • Renal, hepatic, neurologic, hematologic, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)
  • Persons who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV infection);

• Women who are or will be pregnant during the influenza season
• Children and adolescents (aged 6 months through 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye's syndrome after influenza virus infection
• Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
• American Indians/Alaska Natives; and
• Persons who are morbidly obese (BMI ≥40).
The Flu: Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms of “The Flu” usually present suddenly
People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or “feeling feverish” and may have chills
  - It's important to know that not everyone with the flu will have a fever.
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea
  (more common in children than adults)
Flu Prevention: What can you do?

• The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year.

• Routine annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months and older who do not have any contraindications to the vaccine.

• Vaccination should occur before the onset of influenza activity in the community.

• Vaccinations are recommended to be received annually by October, if possible.

• If the vaccine is not received by October, it should be offered to people as long as the influenza viruses are circulating.

Video: Why should I get a Flu vaccine?
Flu Treatment: If you become infected

• There are medications used to treat the flu called antivirals

• Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid, an inhaled powder, or an intravenous solution) that fight against the flu in your body

• Antiviral drugs are not sold over-the-counter.

• You can only get them if you have a prescription from your doctor or health care provider.

• Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics, which fight against bacterial infections.

• If you get the flu, antiviral drugs are a treatment option and a second line defense to treat the flu

• Antivirals can decrease the length (shorten course of the flu by 1-2 days) and can decrease the severity of the flu

• REMEMBER: The Flu vaccine is your 1st line of protection and even if you get the flu, you SHOULD STILL BE VACCINATED!
Resources & Reference

Please visit the following website for additional details:

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/faq/index.htm
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm