



Jeb Bush
Governor

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Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Influenza Fact Sheet

Flu Symptoms, Protection and What to Do If You Get Sick

Influenza (commonly called the “flu”) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. People may have different reactions to the flu. The flu can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Although most healthy people recover from the flu without complications, some people, such as older people, young children and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

Know the Common Symptoms of Flu

Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Body aches

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

Know the Risks from the Flu

In some people, the flu can cause serious complications, including bacterial pneumonia, dehydration and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes. Children and adults may develop sinus problems and ear infections.

Know How the Flu Spreads

The flu usually spreads from person to person in respiratory droplets when people who are infected cough or sneeze. People may inadvertently infect themselves by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. It is possible to give someone the flu before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick. In fact, healthy adults may infect others one day before getting they even know they’re sick, and up to five days after getting sick

Protection from the Flu

The single best way to protect yourself and others against influenza is to get a flu vaccination (flu shot) each year. October or November is the best time to get a flu shot, but you can still get vaccinated in December and later. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as springtime. In Florida, flu season typically peaks during February and early March, so there’s still plenty of time to get a flu shot.

(MORE)



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KNOW ABOUT THE FLU – Page 2

Habits for Good Health

The following additional measures can help protect against the flu. These steps may help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze – throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school and social gatherings. In this way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

What to Do If You Get Sick

It is very difficult to distinguish the flu from other infections based on symptoms alone. A doctor's exam may be needed to tell whether you have developed the flu or a complication of the flu. There are laboratory tests that can determine if you have the flu as long as you are tested within the first two or three days of illness.

If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about your illness, especially if you are at high risk for complications of the flu or live with someone at risk, you should consult your health-care provider. Those at high risk for complications include people 65 years or older, people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, and young children.

Other Ways to Respond to the Flu

If you get the flu, get plenty of rest, drink a lot of healthy liquids and avoid using alcohol and tobacco. Also, you can take medications such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) to relieve the fever and muscle aches associated with the flu. Important: Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu or www.PinellasHealth.com

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