

SEASONAL FLU

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza virus. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Every year in the U.S. on average 5- 20 % of the population gets the flu. More than 200,000 are hospitalized and 36,000 people die annually.

Symptoms of flu

- fever (usually high)
- headaches
- extreme fatigue
- sore throat, runny nose
- muscle aches
- nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are more common in children

How flu spreads

Flu virus spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes touching something contaminated with the flu virus then touching their nose or mouth can pass the infection. Most healthy adults can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop to 5 days after becoming sick.

Prevention

Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza because it can be given well before virus exposure occurs. It provides safe and effective immunity throughout the influenza season and can avert potentially serious complications.

When to vaccinate.

As soon as influenza vaccine is available and continue through December and later. Outbreaks can happen in October but most influenza activity peaks in January or later.

Who should get vaccinated.

- Anyone 6 months or older who wants to reduce their chances of getting influenza.
- Pregnant women
- Persons older than 50 years of age.
- Anyone with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart disease.
- Persons living in Nursing homes and other long term care facilities.
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from influenza
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age.
- Health care workers- this has resulted in fewer work absenteeism and fewer deaths among nursing home patients.

Who should *not* get vaccinated.

- Those with severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- Those who have had a severe reaction to influenza vaccine.
- People who have developed Guillian Barre syndrome within 6 weeks of getting influenza vaccine
- Children less than 6 months of age.
- People who have moderate to severe illness with a fever (they should wait till they recover to get vaccinated).

It takes 2 weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop that protect against influenza virus infection. The flu vaccine will not protect against non- flu viruses. Antiviral drugs can be second line of defense to treat or prevent the flu.

Good health habits for prevention.

- Get vaccinated.
- Avoid contact with those who are sick and keep a distance from others when you are sick.
- Stay at home from work, school and errands when sick to prevent spread of the virus.
- Cover your mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, eat nutritious food and drink plenty of fluids.

Flu vaccinations are now available by calling Dr. Tandon's office at 537-2309. We are located at 123 Broadway, Colchester (Opposite Harry's).