

## Influenza (flu) Information Sheet

### What is Influenza?

Influenza, or “the flu,” is a contagious disease of the nose, throat, and lungs, caused by a virus. The disease can range from mild to severe. The elderly, very young children, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions become infected more easily, and these infections tend to be the most severe.

### How can you catch Influenza?

People with flu can spread it when they cough, sneeze, or talk. Tiny droplets containing the virus leave their nose or mouth and can enter the mouths and noses of people nearby. It is also possible to catch the flu by touching objects or surfaces contaminated with the flu virus, though this is less common. People with the flu can spread the virus before they even feel sick and can continue spreading the virus up to one week after they first show symptoms.

### What are the symptoms of Influenza?

People usually start feeling sick 1 to 4 days after coming into contact with the flu virus. Symptoms can include:

- Fever or chills
- Sore throat
- Muscle or body aches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headaches
- Vomiting/diarrhea (common in children)

### How can you be treated for Influenza?

People with the flu should rest, drink fluids (such as water, broth, and sports drinks), and avoid using alcohol or tobacco. Your doctor may prescribe an antiviral medication to make your illness milder and prevent complications. Most people recover within one or two weeks, but more severe cases can lead to other infections, like pneumonia, and may require hospitalization.

### How can you prevent Influenza?

**The best way to prevent influenza is by getting the influenza vaccine every year.**

Other methods to avoid contracting the flu include:

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.
- While sick, limit your contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth with a tissue and discard the tissue afterwards.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.