

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Influenza (Flu)

### What is Flu?

Flu is a viral infection of the respiratory tract.

### Who can get Flu?

Flu affects all age groups. Those at high risk for developing complications include children under the age of 2, pregnant women, adults over the age of 65, and those who have a chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, HIV, diabetes and/or asthma.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms start suddenly with fever, headache, muscle pain, cough, runny nose, chills and sore throat. Sometimes children may have an upset stomach and diarrhea. The cough may last 2-7 days.

### How long after exposure do symptoms first begin?

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after exposure.

### How is Flu spread?

The flu virus is spread from person to person by droplets from the nose, throat and mouth through sneezing, coughing, and speaking. The virus can live on surfaces for up to 8 hours at room temperature. Sometimes people become infected by touching an object with the flu virus on it and then touch their mouth or nose.

You **cannot become infected** by receiving the Influenza vaccine.

### How long is a person contagious?

Usually 1 day prior to onset of symptoms and up to 7 or more days after becoming ill.

### Is Flu dangerous?

It can be. Most people are sick for only a few days. Some, however, may develop pneumonia.

### Is there a treatment for Flu?

Stay at home, rest and drink lots of fluids. Prescription drugs called antiviral agents can be used to prevent or treat the flu. Children and teens with flu should not be given aspirin or aspirin products because of the risk of developing Reye's Syndrome.

### How can Flu be prevented?

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Reduce contact with infected persons whenever possible.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Use good hygiene and hand washing before eating and after using the bathroom.



OVER

## **HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:**

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
  - backs of hands
  - wrists
  - between fingers
  - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

**For more information on Influenza, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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