



1/24/18

Subject: Health Alert-Influenza

What is it? Flu is a contagious disease caused by influenza viruses that infect the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs). It can cause mild to severe illness, sometimes leading to death. Influenza symptoms often begin suddenly, with fever, chills, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and body aches. Most people recover within a week after they become ill, although they may continue to feel tired for several days. Influenza can last longer and cause life-threatening complications in elderly persons and in persons with chronic medical conditions.

How is the flu spread? It's spread from person to person when droplets of moisture from a person with influenza are spread through the air when that person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets contain viruses that when inhaled by another person can cause an infection.

How long is an infected person able to spread influenza? A person can spread the flu from 24 hours before the start of their illness to 3-5 days after their illness starts. Young children can spread the virus for 7 days or longer.

How soon do symptoms appear? Symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after a person has been exposed to respiratory droplets from an infected person.

How is influenza diagnosed? Usually the diagnosis is based on the appearance of signs and symptoms. Confirmation can be achieved through laboratory testing of throat specimens or blood samples.

How is influenza treated? Certain anti-viral drugs available with a physician's prescription may reduce the severity of disease caused by influenza if therapy is started early in the course of the illness (within 48 hours of the beginning of symptoms).

What should you do if you are sick? Stay at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol.

Is there a vaccine to help prevent the flu? Yes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. The flu shot is safe and effective for people six months old and older. The Clark County Health Department still has flu vaccines available for both adults and children. To find out our clinic hours or for more information on immunizations, please call 715-743-5105 or visit our website at www.co.clark.wi.us/healthdepartment.

What else can I do to help prevent getting sick? Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Stay home when you are sick to keep from infecting others. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand rub if water is not available. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects such as doorknobs, faucets, your phone, etc. Eat nutritious meals and get plenty of rest.

Additional information about the flu is available at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/influenza/index.htm>. Come "Like Us" on Facebook for health alerts/health information/health tips.