

*Texas Health Resources
Staff Education*

INFLUENZA

Preparation and Prevention:

You are the key!

DEFINITIONS

- ◆ Seasonal influenza (flu): respiratory illness caused by the typical flu strains which are seen every year during flu season (usually the winter months).
- ◆ Pandemic flu: respiratory illness caused by a new influenza A virus appearing in humans, causing serious disease, & spreading easily from person-to-person worldwide.



- Avian (bird) flu: flu virus strain (H5N1) that occurs naturally in wild birds & can be spread from birds to humans. When the virus starts spreading easily from human-to-human, a pandemic can occur.



- Swine influenza: flu virus strain (H1N1) that occurs naturally in pigs & can be spread from pigs to humans. A change in the virus in 2009 allowed person-to-person transmission, leading to a mild pandemic.

Seasonal Flu Facts

- ◆ Seasonal flu is very contagious.
- ◆ Flu can cause mild to severe illness.
- ◆ It is the 8th leading cause of death in the United States.
- ◆ Every year in the United States:
 - 5 to 20% of people get the flu.
 - More than 200,000 people go to the hospital due to complications.
 - An estimated 3,000 to 49,000 people die from flu-related causes.



Seasonal & Pandemic Flu Are Alike in Many Ways

- ◆ People are contagious for 1 day before they have symptoms & for about 5-7 days after symptoms begin.



- ◆ Flu symptoms for both include:
 - Fever (greater than 100.4°) & chills
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny nose
 - Muscle aches or headache
 - Extreme fatigue (feeling tired)
- ◆ In both types of flu, healthcare workers are considered to be at higher risk due increased exposure to patients with flu.
- ◆ Infected workers pose a high risk of spreading any type of flu to patients, co-workers & others.

More Flu Facts



◆ Flu is spread:

- Through the air by coughing & sneezing
- By direct contact with people & objects (such as dirty tissues or door knobs)

◆ Complications of flu may include:

- Pneumonia
- Ear & sinus infections
- Worsening of chronic conditions
- Death

Preparing for Flu Season

- ◆ **Follow public health advice** regarding school closures, avoiding crowds, and other social distancing measures.
- ◆ **Stay home if you get sick.** CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- ◆ Influenza is **spread mainly person-to-person** through coughing or sneezing of infected people. Teach those around you to cover their coughs & sneezes, either into a tissue or into their sleeve.
- ◆ **Clean your hands** often with soap & water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners also work well.
- ◆ **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose or mouth, as flu germs can spread this way.
- ◆ **Get the flu shot!**



Preparing for a Pandemic

- ◆ **Stay informed.** Go to the Centers for Disease Control website at pandemicflu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for more information. Listen to the radio/TV for public health information. Become familiar with the THR “Management of Emerging & Pandemic Respiratory Illness Plan” & watch the MyTexasHealth.org website for updates.
- ◆ **Keep some extra supplies** in your home, such as canned/boxed food, bottled water & prescription medications.
- ◆ **Make plans** now for care of children, disabled & elderly persons who depend on you, & also your pets.
- ◆ **Take everyday actions to stay healthy**—eat healthy, drink plenty of water, try to get plenty of sleep.
- ◆ Find healthy ways to **deal with stress and anxiety**, such as exercise & hobbies.



Protecting Yourself, Your Patients & Your Family from the Flu: What Healthcare Workers Can Do

- ◆ **CLEAN YOUR HANDS!**
Secretions of infected persons carry the virus.
- ◆ **WEAR A MASK** when caring for patients who have or may have the flu. Seasonal flu requires an isolation (regular) mask.
- ◆ **COVER YOUR COUGH/SNEEZE** (Respiratory Etiquette)
 - Always cough into a tissue or your sleeve
 - Then clean your hands (wash with soap or use an alcohol product)
 - Teach **EVERYONE**, including patients & your family/friends, to follow this practice.
- ◆ **STAY HOME** if you think you may have the flu, especially if running a fever. Notify your call-in person.
- ◆ **TAKE THE FLU SHOT!**



Who should get vaccinated?

- ◆ **Everyone 6 months of age or older** should get vaccinated each year against seasonal flu.

Flu vaccination is especially important for:

- ◆ Pregnant women
- ◆ People 65 years of age and older
- ◆ People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- ◆ People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- ◆ People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu:
 - ◆ **Healthcare workers**
 - ◆ Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - ◆ Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)



Flu Shots: Side Effects & Contraindications

◆ Possible side effects:

- Soreness at vaccination site
- Fever or feeling achy or tired for 1-2 days
- Allergic reactions
- The flu shot **cannot** “give” a person the flu!



◆ Who should not take the flu shot:

- Those with a *life-threatening* egg allergy, previous severe reaction to flu vaccine, or acute illness with fever should not take the flu shot.
- Flu vaccines are inactivated viruses, therefore safe* in all trimesters of pregnancy & safe* for breastfeeding mothers/infants.

**Unless contraindicated by other medical conditions. Consult your physician about your particular situation if you have concerns.*

SUMMARY

- ◆ Flu is an unpredictable disease that can cause severe illness in patients, healthcare workers, and the public.
- ◆ Be prepared by having a plan in place should the flu season increase in severity. Review the THR guidelines for dealing with pandemic situations & stay informed.
- ◆ Be prepared by entering the flu season as a healthy person.
- ◆ Practice “safe flu” by covering your cough (& teaching others to do the same), wearing masks per precautions, and cleaning your hands frequently.
- ◆ Be prepared by getting the flu shot. Stay tuned for announcements from your facility which will tell you when & where you can get your yearly flu shot!

