Texas Health Resources Staff Education

INFLUENZA

Preparation and Prevention:

You are the key!

DEFINITIONS

- <u>Seasonal influenza (flu):</u> 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.

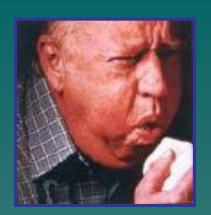
More Flu Facts

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 <u>cannot</u> "give" a person the flu!



- Who should not take the flu shot:
 - Those with a <u>life-threatening</u> 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!