

THE FLU: GUIDE FOR PARENTS



WHAT IS THE FLU & HOW SERIOUS IS IT?

- + Influenza or “the flu” is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. There are many different influenza viruses, and they are constantly changing. Influenza can cause illness, hospitalization or death. The flu causes 36,000 deaths in the U.S. each year.
- + The flu can be very dangerous for children. Each year about 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized with flu.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS & HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- + Symptoms of the flu include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people with the flu will not have a fever.
- + Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets released when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get the flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.
- + People with the flu are contagious from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. Children and people with weakened immune systems can shed virus for longer, and might be still contagious past 5 to 7 days of being sick, especially if they still have symptoms.



PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM THE FLU

HOW DO I PREVENT THE FLU?

- + To protect against the flu, the most important thing you can do is to **get a flu vaccine** for yourself and your child.
 - Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.
 - It's especially important that young children and children with long term health conditions get vaccinated.
 - Caregivers of children with health conditions or of children younger than 6 months old should get vaccinated.
 - Another way to protect babies is to vaccinate pregnant women because research shows that this gives some protection to the baby both while the woman is pregnant and for a few months after the baby is born.
 - Huron County Public Health have vaccines for both children and adults. Call 419-668-1652.
- + In addition to getting vaccinated:
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Stay away from people who are sick.
 - Wash hands often with soap and water for as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - If someone in the household is sick, try to keep the sick person in a separate room.
 - Keep surfaces like bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

For more information on influenza and other health topics, visit www.huroncohealth.com

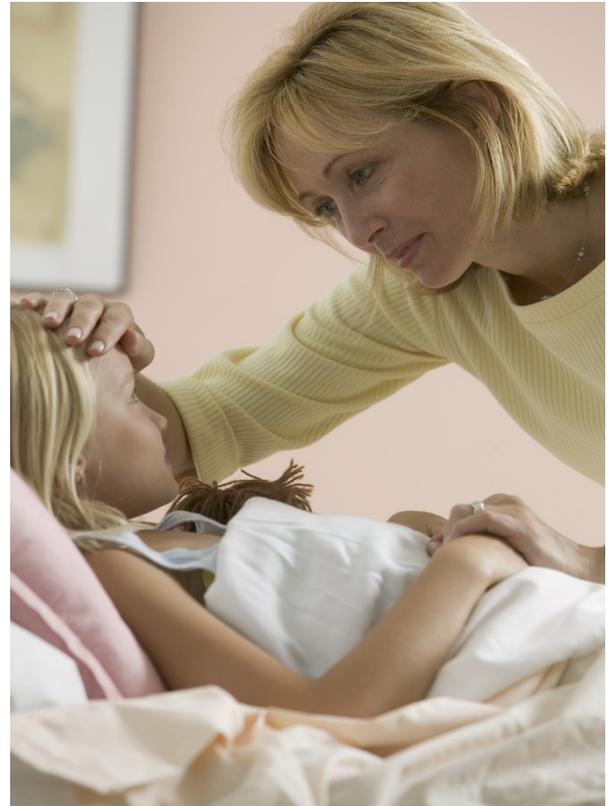
IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD GETS SICK?

- + **Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.**
- + If your child is 5 years and older and does not have other health problems and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.
- + If your child is younger than 5 years (and especially younger than 2 years) or of any age with a long term health condition (like asthma, a neurological condition, or diabetes, for example) and develops flu-like symptoms, they are at risk for serious complications from the flu. Ask a doctor if your child should be examined.

WHAT IF MY CHILD SEEMS *VERY* SICK?

- + Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get very sick from the flu.
- + Call for emergency care or take your child to a doctor right away if your child of any age has any of the warning or emergency signs below:
 - Fast breathing or trouble breathing,
 - Bluish or gray skin color,
 - Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or making as much urine as they normally do),
 - Severe or persistent vomiting that results in dehydration,
 - Not waking up or not interacting,
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held,
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough, or
 - Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes, or asthma) and develops flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough.



CAN MY CHILD GO TO SCHOOL WHEN SICK WITH THE FLU?

- + **No.** Your child should stay home to rest and recover, and to avoid giving the flu to other children or caregivers.
- + Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for **at least 24 hours after their fever is gone.** (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as **100°F (37.8°C) or higher.**
- + It is important to know that your child could have the flu even if they do not have a fever (they can still be contagious without a fever). If your child has a combination of the other flu symptoms, consider keeping him or her home.

Huron County Public Health

www.huroncohealth.com

