

Influenza 2009: Patient Information – What to Do about the Flu

Public Health Bulletin prepared by Dr. Diana Yu, Thurston County Health Officer

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO GET THE FLU!

- ◆ Protect yourself, your family, and community by staying informed. Information is available at 709-3080 or www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/personalhealth/influenza/swineflu.html
- ◆ Cover your cough or sneeze.
- ◆ Wash your hands often.
- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ◆ Stay at least 3 feet away from folks who are coughing and sneezing.
- ◆ Stay home if you are sick. Do not go to work and do not send ill children to school or child care.
- ◆ Get a seasonal influenza immunization as soon as possible.
- ◆ Get an H1N1 Pandemic Influenza immunization as soon as it becomes available.
- ◆ BOTH types of vaccine are needed and are separate immunizations

Symptoms – Seasonal and H1N1 Pandemic Influenza

- ◆ Although Seasonal and H1N1 Pandemic Influenza are different viruses the symptoms are the same.
- ◆ Sudden high fever over 100°F, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills. In addition to fever and cough, some people also have vomiting and diarrhea with flu.
- ◆ Symptoms last for 5 – 7 days, tiredness and cough may last longer.
- ◆ Contagious for up to 7 days after symptoms begin.
- ◆ Also can be contagious one day before illness symptoms, but since there is no coughing or sneezing, exposure is less likely.

If you are Sick

- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids and stay away from others.
- ◆ Stay home until fever free for at least 24 hours without taking any fever reliever.
- ◆ If you have to get medical care, wear a mask or cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue,

Signs of Possible Severe Illness (Call your Health Care Provider for advice or seek emergency care)

- ◆ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- ◆ Severe or persistent vomiting, cannot keep fluids down.
- ◆ Not waking up or not interacting.
- ◆ Confusion.
- ◆ Sudden dizziness and/or cannot stand up without being dizzy.
- ◆ For children, being so irritable that they do not want to be held.

Testing and Treatment

- ◆ It is not necessary to do any testing to diagnose flu. Most Health Care Providers diagnose influenza based on symptoms.
- ◆ Most people will get better without any medical care or treatment.
- ◆ Make sure you drink plenty of fluids and know the signs of more severe illness.
- ◆ Antiviral medications can be given to treat those who are at risk of or who become severely ill.
- ◆ Preventive treatment is recommended for those at high risk of complications.
- ◆ Antiviral medications may have side effects, especially in young children, and should not be used unless needed.
- ◆ Your Health Care Provider will decide if you need to be treated.

People at Higher Risk of serious complications

- ◆ Children younger than 5 years of age
- ◆ Pregnant women.
- ◆ People of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, smokers or heart disease)
- ◆ People of any age who are immunosuppressed (e.g., taking steroid medications daily, on treatment for cancer, immunosuppressive medications, infected with HIV).