



IT'S FLU SEASON!

What You Need to Know from Your Faith Community Nurses

Influenza (or what we call “the flu”) is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. Usually, it peaks in the Midwest between January and March. In North Dakota the flu season began earlier this year and we are still seeing new cases of both Influenza A and B.

The predicted flu viruses are studied by scientists and the top likely viruses are what make up the annual flu vaccine. Because viruses mutate and change easily, the vaccine does not always prevent you from getting the flu, but it will usually lessen your symptoms. Despite rumors, you are not able to get the flu from the vaccine.

So, how might you prevent getting the flu, what are the symptoms, and if you do get the flu, how can you cope?

Keep your immune system (your body’s ability to fight off disease) healthy by following the steps below.

- Keep hydrated and drink plenty of plain water.
- Eat a nutritious and healthy diet.
- **Wash your hands** or use an antimicrobial hand sanitizer using proper technique: Wash with soap and water for 15-20 seconds, sing the alphabet song or Twinkle Twinkle Little Star two times. Rinse. Dry with a paper towel and use a paper towel to turn off the faucets. Dispose of properly. Keep your hands away from your face.
- Maintain proper humidity in your home or use a nasal saline spray to keep your nasal membranes intact.
- **GET A Flu Vaccine....it is not too late.**

Influenza can cause mild to severe illness. The flu is different from a cold, flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills (it’s important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

If you develop the flu:

- Stay home to prevent the spread.
- Wear a surgical mask when around others.
- Keep personal items separate and disinfect doorknobs, switches, handles, cell phones and keyboards, toys with a disinfecting spray/cleaner such as a solution of 1 gallon of water with ¼ c. bleach
- Rest and take in fluids. Do not drink alcohol or use tobacco.
- Take medication as recommended for symptoms.
- Keep a log/journal of health symptoms & medications.
- Cover your mouth/nose with tissues, clean your hands frequently after cough/sneeze. Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if no tissue is available.

Seek out medical attention if you have: high fever, shaking, chills, cough with thick mucus, dehydration, symptoms worsen, chest pain, difficulty breathing, stiff neck, seizure, change in behavior or level of consciousness, or have a previous medical condition to be monitored.

If you have further concerns please contact Brenda Bauer, Deacon Nurse at Olivet or visit www.CDC.gov or www.NIH.gov for the most reliable information.