

Message from the Parish Nurses

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THE FLU

~What To Do If I Get Sick~

The 2017-2018 flu season is here. Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu can result in hospitalization or death. People that are at risk of serious flu-like complications are: young children, people 65 years old and older, pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions.

How Do I Know If I Have The Flu?

You may have the flu if you have some or all of these symptoms.

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- 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.

What Should I Do If I Get Sick?

Most people with the flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care.

If, however, you have symptoms of flu and are in a high risk group, or are very sick or worried about your illness, contact your health care provider (doctor, physician assistant, etc.). People at high risk of serious flu-related complications are:

- Adults 65 years old and older
- Pregnant women
- Young children
- Children with neurologic conditions
- Asthma
- Heart Disease & Stroke
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Cancer

If you are in a high risk group and develop flu symptoms, it's best for you to contact your doctor early in your illness. Remind them about your high risk status

for flu. CDC recommends that people at high risk for complications should get antiviral treatment as early as possible, because benefit is greatest if treatment is started within 2 days after illness onset.

When Would I Need To Go To The Emergency Room?

If you have emergency warning signs of flu sickness, you should go to the emergency room. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications or are concerned about your illness, call your health care provider for advice. If you go to the emergency room and you are not sick with the flu, you may catch it from people who do have it.

What Are The Emergency Warning Signs Of Flu Sickness?

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluid
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child doesn't want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with rash

In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for any infant who has any of these signs:

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

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Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/takingcare.htm>

More information can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/complications.htm#complications>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high-risk.htm>

Visit: www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org for "Are There Medicines To Treat The Flu? How Long Should I Stay Home If I'm Sick? What Should I Do While I'm Sick? Should I Get The Flu Vaccine?"

Are There Medicines To Treat The Flu?

Yes. There are prescription medications your doctor may prescribe for treating the flu called “antiviral drugs”. These drugs can make you feel better faster and may also prevent serious complications. Antiviral drugs fight against the influenza (flu) virus in your body. They are different than antibiotics, which fight against bacterial infection. More information on the antiviral drugs can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/whyshould.htm>

How Long Should I Stay Home If I’m Sick?

CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol. You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

What Should I Do While I’m Sick?

Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. If you must leave home, for example to get medical care, wear a facemask if you have one, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.

- Wash your hands often to keep from spreading flu to others.
- Stay at home and rest.
- Avoid close contact with well people in your home so you won’t make them sick.
- Drink plenty of water and other clear liquids to prevent fluid loss (dehydration).

Should I Get The Flu Vaccine

Yes. Antiviral drugs are not a substitute for getting the flu vaccine. While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works, a flu vaccine is the first and best way to prevent seasonal influenza. Antiviral drugs are a second line of defense to treat the flu (including seasonal flu and variant flu viruses) if you get sick.

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every year, unless you have a medical reason not to. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May. It’s best to get the vaccine as soon as it becomes available. But you can still get vaccinated in January or later. It takes two weeks for the flu shot to become effective after you get it.

Flu vaccination has important benefits. It can reduce flu illnesses, doctor’s visits, and missed work or school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations.

Different flu vaccines are approved for use in different groups of people. Factors that can determine a person’s suitability for vaccinations, or vaccination with a particular vaccine, includes a person’s age, health (current and past) and any relevant allergies.

Flu shots are approved for use in pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions. There are flu shots that are also approved for use in people as young as 6 months.

Who Should Not Receive A Flu Shot?

People who cannot get a flu shot:

- Children younger than 6 months.
- People with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine or any of its ingredients.

Note: There are certain flu shots that have different age indications. For example, people younger than 65 years of age should not get the high-dose flu shot and people who are younger than 18 years old or older than 65 years old should not get the intradermal flu shot.

People who should talk to their doctor before getting the flu shot:

- People who have an allergy to eggs or other vaccine ingredients.
- People who have ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS).
- People who are feeling ill.

Special Consideration Regarding Egg Allergy

The recommendations for vaccination of people with egg allergies were changed for 2016-2017 flu season.

People with egg allergies can receive any licensed, recommended age-appropriate influenza vaccine and no longer have to be monitored for 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine. People who have severe egg allergies should be vaccinated in a medical setting and be supervised by a health care provider who is able to recognize and manage severe allergic conditions.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/treatment/index.html>

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