

DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET THE FLU?

Everyone talks about getting the flu, but do you really know how to recognize seasonal flu and what to do about it? In the United States, over 35,000 people die of seasonal flu each year. Seasonal flu outbreaks follow predictable seasonal patterns – usually in winter and early spring. That’s why it’s important to get a flu shot before the peak flu “season”. The flu virus spreads mainly through coughs and sneezes from someone who is infected. People with flu can also pass on the virus by touching things like a doorknob with their hands.

Avoid getting the flu by practicing good cleanliness. Wash your hands and teach your children to wash theirs. Make sure you cover your cough properly, which means coughing into your elbow or sleeve and not in your hands. Stay away from those who are sick if possible. Clean your sinks, countertops, electronic devices and other often used appliances and areas with disinfectant.

The flu is a contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. It attacks the nose, throat and lungs. The flu usually comes on suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- body aches
- dry cough
- fever
- headache
- stuffy or runny nose (nasal congestion)
- sore throat
- tiredness (can be extreme)

Flu symptoms can range from mild to life-threatening. The flu can also lead to dangerous complications such as pneumonia or dehydration. If you are 65 or older, or if you have a serious medical condition, please check with a medical expert at the first signs of the flu illness. Early flu treatment can protect you. The flu season can last through March or longer.

If you think you have the flu contact your physician, rest drink plenty of fluids, avoid using alcohol and tobacco and take medications to relieve flu symptoms like fever, body aches and nasal congestion. For children 18 and younger use an acetaminophen product not aspirin. Most importantly stay at home so as not to infect others.

If you don’t have the flu you can follow a few simple steps to protect yourself and your family from getting sick:

- Eat a nutritious balanced diet including fruits and vegetables
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water
- Get enough sleep (the average adult requires 6-8 hours of sleep each night and the average child / teenager requires between 8 -10 hours of sleep each night)
- Wash your hands after contact with your mouth or nose and before handling food
- Stay at home if you or your family members are sick

The Fairfield Department of Health offers flu vaccines for those over 6 months of age and older. Call 740-652-2800 for an appointment.