

INFLUENZA (FLU)

What is the Flu?

The Flu is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract. It can lead to pneumonia and even death.

How is it spread?

Flu is spread by ingesting or inhaling droplets, by handling soiled objects such as handkerchiefs, and by using the eating utensils of infected persons. The virus is spread quickly among crowded populations in enclosed spaces.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms may include fever, chills, headache, general aching, tiredness and a loss of appetite. The signs may include inflammation of the lining of the nose, throat, tonsils, and upper breathing tubes of the lungs.

What is the incubation period and how long is it communicable?

Symptoms usually begin in 1-3 days after exposure to the virus and generally last for 2-7 days. Flu is thought to be communicable after symptoms start for 3-5 days in adults and up to 7 days in young children.

How can Flu be prevented?

The best prevention is by getting your yearly flu vaccine. Handwashing, respiratory etiquette, prompt exclusion of sick children/staff and not sharing items such as cups, glasses and utensils is very important in preventing the spread of the disease.

It is recommended to use spray bottles to apply the disinfectant (1 part bleach to 9 parts of cool water to be prepared daily) to contaminated surfaces such as toilets, sinks, floors, tables, water fountains or any areas where a sick individual has been.

What should I do about it?

Persons who have these symptoms should see their physicians.

A child or sensitive worker should not be in school/daycare or at work until 24 hrs after symptoms subside. If more than one case is identified, the individual must be excluded until 48 hrs after symptoms subside.

Drink plenty of fluids, cough and sneeze into your sleeve or blow into a tissue and discard it, and stay home when ill. **WASH YOUR HANDS.** In severe cases or in immune-suppressed individuals, seek a physician's care. Anti-viral medications have proved useful, if started early in the illness.

Clusters of two or more persons (in a non-family situation) are considered a **reportable disease** to the Santa Rosa County Health Department (SRCHD).

For more information, please contact the SRCHD at 850-983-5200.

