GET READY FOR FLU SEASON

As we approach cold and flu season, we can take some basic steps to protect ourselves and our families, co-workers, and fellow students from illness. To increase your ability to distinguish the flu from the common cold, general symptoms of each are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Cold</th>
<th>Flu</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Fever (usually higher than 101° F)</td>
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<td>Watery nasal drainage</td>
<td>Aches and pains, especially in joints, muscles, and around the eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>General weakness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Warm, flushed skin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-grade fever (below 101° F)</td>
<td>Headache</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dry cough</td>
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Not only do cold and flu viruses have similar symptoms, but they can be transferred and prevented in similar ways. The most common way we spread viruses is through direct transmission via airborne secretions from a cough or sneeze, touching a contaminated surface, or through direct contact with an infected individual, then touching our own eyes, nose, or mouth. Therefore the best defense is a good offense! Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and warm water for the length of time it takes you to sing *Happy Birthday* twice in your head.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer the following tips to help stop the spread of germs that cause the cold and flu:

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
2. Stay home when you are sick to prevent infecting others.
3. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue, handkerchief, or in the absence of a tissue, cough into the crook of your elbow. Discard the tissue immediately after use.
4. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently. In the absence of soap and warm water, use an alcohol-based hand rub until you can wash your hands.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because this is how germs are spread.

6. Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Prevention Through Vaccination

Consider getting a flu vaccination for prevention of the flu virus. The upcoming 2012-2013 season’s flu vaccine will protect against the three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the season. The vaccine consists of two type A strains and one type B strain. While the H1N1 virus used to make the 2012-2013 flu vaccine is the same virus that was included in the 2011-2012 vaccine, the recommended influenza H3N2 and B vaccine viruses are different from those in the 2011-2012 influenza vaccine for the Northern Hemisphere.

If you choose to get vaccinated or offer vaccinations at your worksite, try to get the vaccinations early in the flu season and before holiday gatherings begin. Holiday and family events are prime opportunities for the spread of cold and flu viruses.

Reducing Symptoms Through Antivirals

Once you’ve contracted the flu, consider using an antiviral medication to reduce the severity of symptoms. These antivirals are available by prescription only and must be taken early—typically within the first two days of symptoms.

What’s New With the Flu?

- An annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older.
- Children from six months to eight years should receive two doses, four weeks apart, in their first year of receiving the vaccine to develop immune protection. If a child receives one dose in the first year, he or she should receive two doses the following year.
- This year’s flu vaccine will protect against the H3N2 and H1N1 (both influenza A viruses) and an influenza B virus.
- The flu vaccine is not recommended for people with a severe allergy to chicken eggs, or people who have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

Flu-Like Illness Activity as of October 1, 2012:

Based on data available through September 24, the level of flu-like activity since August is generally higher than for the same time period last year. The northern Midwest states of Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, plus the New England states of Vermont and Maine, show the lowest levels of flu-like activity at this time. The highest levels of flu activity are found in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, and Michigan, where there are already moderate levels of flu-like activity. Individuals in these states will have above-average levels of exposure, so they should take the necessary precautions.

Sources: CDC and Google Flu Trends.

For More Information

Please contact your Lockton Health Risk Solutions team or Account Service team for more information.