

Week 1: Hygiene

With flu season around the corner, it is important to start taking steps to help keep your family healthy. Each year there are over 36,000 deaths in United States die from the seasonal flu. Most of these people are the very young, elderly, or have underlying chronic conditions. However, everyone should take the flu seriously and do their part to stop the spread of the flu.

Good hygiene is one way to stop the spread of the flu. Following these healthy hygiene tips will help keep you and those around you healthy.

- 1) Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue on hand, cough or sneeze into your sleeve ("catch the sneeze" in your elbow) NOT your bare hands
- 2) Wash your hands often with soap and hot water
- 3) Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- 4) When hot water and soap are not available use an alcohol based hand sanitizer



What to add to your emergency kit: Tissues, alcohol based hand sanitizer (or hand wipes), over-the-counter flu or cold medicine (be sure to keep track of expiration dates)

Week 2: Getting Vaccinated

The BEST way to avoid getting the flu is to be vaccinated each year as soon as it is available in your area (usually September or October). Anyone who wants to reduce their risk of the flu can and should get vaccinated every year. Two types of vaccines exist. The first is a "flu shot" usually given by a needle in the arm. The second is nasal spray flu vaccine. ACIP (the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) recommends certain priority groups for vaccination. These groups will receive vaccination first when vaccines are in limited supply

People who should get vaccinated each year (priority groups) are:

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
2. Pregnant women
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - a. Health care workers
 - b. Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - c. Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

Those who should NOT get vaccinated without first consulting a physician are:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- People who developed [Guillain-Barré syndrome \(GBS\)](#) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine.
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group), and

- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated.)



What to add to your emergency kit: The location of the nearest flu clinic (or place you can most easily receive a flu shot) as well as the location of where to get vaccinated during a pandemic flu (once vaccine is available). The Health Department will be able to provide this information once a vaccine is developed and available for dispensing.

Week 3: If you get sick...

Stay home! Stay home from work, school, errands, etc. Make sure you get plenty of rest and fluids and make an appointment with your health care provider when needed. You may need a doctor's note for your employer to excuse your absence, but the best way to protect others from getting sick is keeping your distance when you do not feel well. If you have children who are ill make sure you keep them home from school, daycare, etc.

Common symptoms of the flu¹: fever, headache, extreme tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, and nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)



What to add to your emergency kit: Doctor and pediatrician phone numbers; employer contact information (in case you need to miss work)

Week 4: Pandemic Flu

On June 11, 2009 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic of Novel Influenza A (H1N1). A Pandemic means that a new influenza virus subtype has emerged and is spreading easily among humans (humans have no immunity to the new virus). The pandemic phase does not indicate the severity of the virus.

For the most current information on pandemic flu viruses see <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

WHO offers a preparedness checklist for Pandemic Flu

http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO_CDS_CSR_GIP_2005_4/en/index.html

The Health Department will also do all it can to help provide information during pandemic flu outbreaks. Listen to updates from the Health Department and check the website (and local media sites) to stay informed. Depending on the severity of the outbreak, antiviral medications and vaccines (when available) will be dispensed to those who need it.



What to add to your emergency kit: Website address and phone number for the Health Department (see <http://www.co.monroe.mi.us/publichealth>) and local media websites

¹ Center for disease control and prevention. 7 March 2007. <http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm>