

Protect yourself from the flu

We are in the midst of flu season. The most effective action to provide protection against the flu is to get an influenza vaccination, however it is not always 100% effective. Here are additional health behaviors you and your family can use in order to help **prevent the spread of the flu virus**.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, stay at home in order to prevent others from getting sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing. If you do not have a tissue, it is best to sneeze or cough into your sleeve rather than into your hands.
Refer to: www.coughsafe.com/media.html
- Wash your hands often to help protect yourself and others from germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Viruses are more easily spread through these routes.
- Stay Healthy. Stay well rested, engage in regular physical activity, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- Children are major contributors to flu infection. They should also use good flu prevention habits. Teach them to cover their nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, wash their hands with soap and water, and remind them not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth.

In addition to providing protection against the seasonal flu, adopting the above health behaviors can also provide protection in the event of pandemic influenza.

Pandemic flu occurs when there is a new strain of influenza virus that causes high numbers of severe illnesses and passes easily from person to person. Because there is no natural immunity, the disease spreads rapidly throughout the world.

Avian influenza A (H5N1) virus, commonly known as “bird flu”, is a strain of influenza that has caused illness and death among poultry worldwide. Bird flu has been passed to humans who have had contact with infected poultry. To date, over 250 people worldwide have been infected with bird flu; more than half have died. The current strain of bird flu is NOT easily passed from human to human; therefore it is not presently categorized as pandemic flu.

The seasonal influenza vaccine does not protect against avian influenza. There is currently no vaccine available to protect humans from avian influenza. However, research studies and clinical trials are currently underway so that in the event of an emerging pandemic, vaccines will become available. For more information regarding pandemic flu, visit www.pandemicflu.gov.