

## HOW TO STAY FLU-FREE IN 2012-2013

### What is influenza (Flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu **vaccine** each year.

### How does the flu spread?

The Flu virus is spread mainly by droplets when infected people cough, sneeze or talk. It is also spread by touching a surface with virus-containing droplets that someone with the flu has touched (such as a door knob, stair railing or telephone) and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

### How long are you contagious?

People with the flu are contagious *1 day before* their symptoms start and for up to *7 days after* symptoms appear. This can be longer in some people, especially in young children and people with weakened immune systems.

### How serious is the Flu?

The severity of influenza can widely vary from one season to the next, thus making it very unpredictable. Additionally, factors such as what flu viruses are spreading, vaccine availability, how many people get vaccinated, and how well the flu vaccine is matched to the flu viruses that cause illness also affects the severity of the flu virus.

### Who is High Risk?

Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu. This includes older people, young children, pregnant women, health care workers, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or chronic lung disease). The household contacts of persons categorized as high risk should also be vaccinated.

### What are symptoms of the flu?

The flu starts suddenly and may include some of the following:

- Fever
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Diarrhea, vomiting, nausea (usually children)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches

*It's important to note that not everyone with the flu will have a fever*



### To Keep Everyone Healthy in 2012-2013, the 673<sup>rd</sup> Medical Group recommends the following steps:

- **The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season.**
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available use alcohol-based products.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Be sure to throw away the tissues immediately after use.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, limit contact with others. Seek medical assistance for proper assessment/treatment.
- If you need to see a healthcare provider, contact 580-2778 or visit the ER.
- For more information on flu you can visit the following website: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

