

The Flu

Causes:

Influenza or “the flu” is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The influenza viruses are spread from person to person primarily through the coughing and sneezing of infected persons.

Symptoms:

Adults can be infectious from the day before symptoms begin through approximately 7 days after illness onset. Symptoms generally resolve after 7-10 days, although cough and fatigue can persist for greater than 2 weeks. People with influenza will have some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever, or feeling feverish with chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue

Treatment:

Antiviral drugs can be used for some patients who are at high risk of developing complications, but are not routinely prescribed. Over the counter medications may provide relief for symptoms.

- Decongestants for nasal congestion
- Cough suppressants to decrease coughing
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen for sore throat, fever, body aches, and muscle aches
- Get plenty of rest
- Keep hydrated
- Use a humidifier

To Avoid Spreading Illness to Others:

- Wear a mask if you must be around others
- Frequent hand washing or hand sanitizer use
- Keep mouth and nose covered if coughing or sneezing
- Do not share food, drinks, or utensils with others

- Stay home when you are ill. Email your instructors and explain that you are ill, and make arrangements to make up work missed.
- Stay home until your fever is gone for 24 hours (without taking fever medications). If you live in the residence hall you should stay in your room as much as you can, and wear a mask if you must go out to a communal area. If you have concerns, talk to your RA or call the Main Desk staff in your residence hall.

Prevention:

- Get a flu vaccine every year – offered at Student Health Services, Walgreens, and Walmart
- Wash your hands regularly
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Practice other healthy behaviors like eating right, being physically active, and getting enough sleep