

It's That Time of Year!

It is that time of year that we will be getting colds and possibly the flu. I will address frequently asked questions.

Is it a cold or the flu?

- A cold is a viral infection of the nose and throat. It is usually 12 hours to 5 days, for a cold to incubate after being exposed. A cold will most likely only last a week to 10 days and have symptoms of a runny or stuffy nose, and a general sense of not feeling well.
- The flu is a respiratory virus and has more severe symptoms, including sudden onset of high fever, aches, pains, headache, runny nose, sore throat, weakness and fatigue. The flu is highly contagious. Flu germs enter through the mouth or nose by being in close proximity to others who cough or sneeze spreading their germs into your environment. We also pick up the virus by touching contaminated objects and then touching our hands to our face. This is why it is so important to wash your hands!

What can I do if I get the flu?

- If you have fever and chills lasting more than a few days, chest pain that gets worse on inspiration, or you have uncontrolled vomiting and/or diarrhea, call your physician. Stay away from others. Don't pass your germs around.

What can I do to prevent illness?

- Besides **washing your hands often**, get plenty of rest, eat a balanced diet, and drink plenty of water and exercise. Exercise is important because it will help strengthen the immune system. The water will help hydrate the body and flush the body of toxins. An interesting article I read in the November issue of Health, discussed how cold viruses gain entry by attaching to a molecule in the nasal

lining called ICAM-1. To reduce ICAM-1 levels so it is harder for the cold virus to attach, spray your nasal passages with saline. Sounds simple enough.

What if I have an infection?

- If you have been diagnosed with an infection and given an antibiotic, take it as prescribed. Just because you start to feel better, is not a reason “to save” the medication to use again if you get sick. By not finishing the prescribed dosage, you are reducing your chances of getting completely over what is making you sick and you are building resistance against the bacteria.
- **The flu is viral and is best prevented by the flu shot.**

Remember, your best defense, after a flu shot, is WASHING YOUR HANDS OFTEN!

If you feel you may only need a decongestant, antihistamine or pain reliever, these can be purchased over the counter (OTC). But you should consult your physician or pharmacist first to ensure the OTC will not react with any prescriptions you may be taking. Beware that the pain reliever, aspirin, has been linked to Reye’s Syndrome, so do not give this to a child.

Be advised that the flu shot does not protect from the ‘bird flu.’ The flu shot only protects for the strain of flu expected this year. To date, there is a delay in shipment of the yearly flu vaccine. If you have any questions or topics of interest that you would like addressed in the paper, please eMail me at gheffelmire@dearborncounty.in.gov

