



## Frequently asked questions about Preventing the Flu (Stopping the Spread of Germs)

**From the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

Illnesses like the flu and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu and colds usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

### **How to Help Stop the Spread of Germs**

Take care to:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough
- Clean your hands often
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Stay home when you are sick and check with a health care provider when needed
- Practice other good health habits.

### **Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough**

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

### **Clean your hands often**

When available, wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- then rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces. Wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using a gel, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in the gel kills germs that cause colds and the flu.

### **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth**

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some can live for 2 hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and tables.

### **Stay home when you are sick and check with a health care provider when needed**

When you are sick or have flu symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest, and check with a health care provider as needed. Remember: Keeping your distance from others may protect them from getting sick.

**Do I have the flu??** Symptoms of the flu include:

- fever (usually high)
- headache
- extreme tiredness
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches, and
- nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, (much more common among children than adults).

**Practice other good health habits.** When you are healthy, you reduce the chances of getting sick as well as reduce the time you will spend sick. Try to use the following suggestions in your daily life, but especially if you feel a cold or the flu coming on.

- Get plenty of sleep
- Be physically active
- Manage your stress
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Eat nutritious food.

**Practicing healthy habits will help you stay healthy during flu season and all year long.**

### Is it the flu, or just a cold – you make the call

| <u>Symptoms</u>  | <u>Cold</u>                 | <u>Flu</u>                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Fever            | Rare                        | Yes- often high – 102 to 105F lasts 3-4 days |
| Headache         | Rare                        | Yes  |
| Aches and Pains  | slight                      | Yes – often severe                           |
| Weakness         | Mild                        | Yes – can last up to 2-3 weeks               |
| Stuffy Nose      | Common                      | Not usually                                  |
| Sneezing         | Common                      | Sometimes                                    |
| Sore Throat      | Common                      | Sometimes                                    |
| Chest discomfort | Common – mild hacking cough | Common – can become severe                   |

**For more information about germs and other important health information, visit us on the web at:**

[www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org)

**Or contact us at any of our 4 office locations at:**

**Coldwater**  
517-279-9561 x 143

**Hillsdale**  
517-437-7395 x 110

**Sturgis**  
269-659-4013 x 109

**Three Rivers**  
269-273-2161 x 241