



Frequently asked questions about

Influenza (the flu)

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

What is the Flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. While most healthy people recover from the flu without complications, some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

The flu usually starts suddenly and may include these symptoms:

Fever (usually high)	Headache
Headache	Tiredness
Tiredness (can be extreme)	Runny or stuffy nose
Cough /Sore throat	Body Aches
Diarrhea and vomiting (more common in children)	

Remember: A lot of different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

What are the risks from the flu?

Some of the complications caused by the flu include pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. Children and adults may develop sinus problems and ear infections.

How does the flu spread?

The flu spreads from coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person, though occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose (like dirty spoons, forks, cups)

Adults may be able to infect others **1 day before** getting symptoms and up to **7 days after** getting sick. So it is possible to give someone the flu before you know you're sick as well as while you are sick.

How do I prevent getting the flu?

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall, but there are other measures that can help protect against the flu.

Can't I just take some penicillin?

No! Influenza is caused by a virus, so antibiotics, like penicillin don't work to cure it.

What if I cannot get a flu shot, what then. Great question (I wish I had thought of that one). Read on for good health habits to help avoid the flu (and other diseases spread by close contact)

Habits for Good Health

(These steps may help prevent getting or spreading the flu)

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throw the tissue away.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Stay away as much as you can from people who are sick.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work or school.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Get plenty of rest
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco

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

www.bhsj.org

Or call your local Health Department office at:

Coldwater
279-9561 x 143

Hillsdale
437-7395 x 110

Sturgis
659-4013 x 109

Three Rivers
273-2161 x 241