

## Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### What to Do About the Flu?

**(Coldwater, MI).** The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have predicted an early flu season, and for Michigan, their predictions are right on target. The Michigan Department of Community Health is reporting an uptick in the number of cases of influenza. According to Jo Ann Wilczynski, Prevention Services Director, "In Michigan, the flu season typically peaks in February and March. However, Michigan is already reporting a spike in the percent of visits for influenza-like illnesses to local healthcare providers. In fact, within our tri-counties, we have already seen school closings due illnesses."

Seasonal flu outbreaks occur every year. According to the CDC, this year's strains seem to be more virulent, resulting in more symptoms and complications. While vaccination is the best protection against the flu, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers the following tips to managing flu symptoms if you or your loved one comes down with the flu:

1. *Stay at home and rest.* If a fever is present, stay home for at least 24 hours until the fever is gone except to get medical care. (A fever is defined as temperatures at or above 100°F or 37.8°C. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
2. *Avoid close contact with well people so that they are not exposed to the flu.*
3. *Drink plenty of water and other clear liquids to prevent fluid loss (dehydration).*
4. *Treat fever and cough with over the counter medications*
5. *Visit your doctor if you or your loved one is very sick or are pregnant or have a medical condition that puts you at higher risk of flu complications (i.e., 65 years*

and older, young children, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease).

6. *Take an antiviral medicine as directed, if prescribed.*

However, there are times when seeking immediate medical attention may be needed. Call for emergency care or see a doctor right away if the following warning or emergency signs occur:

***In children:***

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

*In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for **any infant** who has any of these signs:*

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

***In adults:***

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by flu viruses. Flu viruses cause illness, may require hospital stays and can cause death. Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people sick with

the flu may experience all these symptoms, while others may not. Jo Ann adds, “Flu spreads from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with flu. People also may get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. That’s why handwashing is such an important measure for stopping the spread of flu. And of course, so is getting your flu shot.”

Jo Ann reminds everyone that it’s not too late to get the flu shot. Getting the flu shot can still minimize your chances of coming down with the flu and spreading it to those around you. The flu shot provides protection in just two weeks and that protection lasts for an entire year. This year’s flu shot protects against different strains of influenza A/H3N2 and influenza B than the previous year’s shot, but also includes A/H1N1 influenza, the virus responsible for the 2009 pandemic. If you still need a flu shot, the health department encourages you to check with your local healthcare provider and/or pharmacy first. Community members interested in obtaining a list of area flu providers can contact their local health department county office to find who is providing shots locally.

To learn more about influenza, check out our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and press the Frequently Asked Questions button.

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