

Influenza Treatment and Prevention Tips

12/29/03

Currently the Broome County Health Department has exhausted its supply of flu vaccine and we do not expect any additional supplies. If we do receive additional vaccine the public will be informed via the media and this web site.

Even though vaccine supplies are being depleted, as is normal this time of year, record numbers of people have already gotten a flu shot this year, which means that fewer people are likely to get sick and expose others to flu.

If you cannot get vaccinated, because you are not considered at high risk, there is no need to be unduly alarmed. If you are at high risk you should keep trying to get vaccinated.

How to tell if you have the flu

Symptoms of flu can include coughing, sneezing, sore throat and runny nose. Unlike the common cold, the flu strikes with sudden severity. High fevers and intense muscle aches are typical flu indicators.

Treating the flu

Adults with the flu need more rest and more fluids than usual. Take aspirin or non-aspirin pain relievers to ease the muscle aches that typically accompany the flu, especially if the patient's pain is resulting in loss of sleep.

Advice for children

Advice for children is the same, except that youngsters under age 18 should not be given aspirin, because of increased risk of getting the potentially deadly Reye Syndrome. Use other medications to reduce fever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

Advice for all

If you develop the flu, it is advisable to get plenty of rest, drink a lot of liquids, and avoid using alcohol and tobacco. Also, you can take medications to relieve the symptoms of flu (but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms – and particularly fever – without first speaking to your doctor).

Advice for people at special risk

If you are at special risk from complications of flu, you should consult your health-care provider when your flu symptoms begin. This includes people 65 years or older, people with chronic medical conditions, including children, pregnant women, and babies

between six months and 23 months old. Your doctor may choose to use certain antiviral drugs to treat the flu (amantadine, rimantadine, and Tamiflu).

It's important to get started on this medicine very soon after symptoms begin. Some of these medicines can also be used longer term by high risk individuals to help prevent flu.

If your condition seems more serious

If you are having unusually severe flu symptoms, (for example, if you are having trouble breathing), you should consult your health-care provider right away.

Seek medical treatment, also, in the case of severe dehydration (for instance, if urination has ceased).

Consult your health care provider, as well, in instances where a patient's demeanor changes abruptly, such as when a sick child suddenly becomes combative or has been complaining but then becomes overly lethargic.

Additional steps you can take to reduce transmission of flu

- To help boost your immune system, get plenty of rest, exercise, and eat properly.
- Know the symptoms of flu.
- Stay home from work or school if you experience flu symptoms. Taking it easy could help you feel better sooner and also will slow the spread of disease to others.
- To reduce the spread of germs, cover your nose and mouth, preferably with disposable tissue, when coughing or sneezing. Always discard used tissue properly in the trash.
- Pay attention to hand-washing. After using the bathroom, before eating and before and after preparing food, clean your hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. Carry a waterless hand gel and wash your hands frequently.
- Clean surfaces you touch frequently, such as door knobs, water faucets, refrigerator handles and telephones.

More information on the Flu can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu

