

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Recommendations for the Home on Influenza and Influenza-like Illness.

A severe influenza season is anticipated this year. Influenza (“the flu”) is a sudden respiratory disease that spreads easily. It is characterized by the sudden onset of fever, body aches, sore throat, headache and cough, and, in children, can also cause diarrhea and vomiting.

- Any family member suspected of having the flu should not attend work or school. Ill family members should be encouraged to rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Wash hands frequently, using soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds (this is generally around the time it takes to sing the ABC’s). Dry hands with as clean a towel as possible. Towels should be changed frequently. Young children should be instructed and assisted to make sure they wash their hands properly. Bathrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and towels are available for your family’s use.
- Flu can be spread by coughs or sneezes. Family members should cover their mouths when coughing and use a disposable tissue when sneezing or blowing their noses. Tissues should be thrown away immediately, and then hands should be washed. (If you cannot wash hands, rub hands with an alcohol hand gel). Make sure tissues are available in the home and car for runny noses and sneezing.
- Encourage all members of your household, especially those with medical conditions and children between six and 23 months of age, to get a flu shot. It is never too late to be vaccinated.
- Spread of the flu in homes is likely. Families should avoid sharing of saliva by not sharing glasses, forks, spoons, toothbrushes, etc.
- Clean surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, kitchen table, etc., frequently with household cleaner or bleach solution. (Mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bleach with one gallon of water makes a bleach solution). If disinfectant is not available, hot water and soap can be used.
- When caring for a family member who is ill, hands should be washed immediately after helping them.

- If family members get the flu, especially if they are elderly or have other medical problems, you may wish to contact their physicians immediately. Their doctors can give antiviral drugs, which may stop them from getting seriously ill. However, taking these drugs does not mean you do not need to get the flu shot.

Who should get the flu shot: *(for more information contact your health care provider or local health department)*

- Persons 50 years of age or older
- Anyone older than six months of age with chronic heart or lung problems, including asthma
- Anyone older than six months of age who has medical problems or was hospitalized during the preceding year because of diseases like diabetes, cancer, kidney problems, etc.
- Anyone between six months and 18 years of age receiving long-term aspirin therapy because of the risk of developing Reye's syndrome after influenza.
- Women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season
- Household members (including children) of persons mentioned above

(Modified from Iowa Department of Public Health, Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology).