

HOW INFLUENZA SPREADS

Influenza viruses spread in tiny droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from person to person. Sometimes, however, people become infected by touching something that was recently contaminated with the virus and then touching their mouth or nose. The virus can live on a surface for up to two to three hours. Most adults may be able to infect others beginning one to two days before they show symptoms and up to five days after becoming sick. If you become infected with influenza, even when your symptoms are mild, you can still spread severe illness to others.

WHO SHOULD GET THE INFLUENZA INOCULATION

- Pregnant women
- Children
- Caregivers & household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare workers & first responders
- Adults 19 to 64

WHO SHOULD NOT GET THE INFLUENZA INOCULATION

Children less than six months of age

INFLUENZA SYMPTOMS

Fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or more

Headache

Extreme tiredness

Dry cough

Sore throat

Muscle aches

Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

A runny nose is not typical of the influenza virus.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INFLUENZA

- There is no need to cancel school or activities based on current disease severity
- Mass gatherings should continue

- Sick individuals, staff, families, friends should stay at home
- No special cleaning of surfaces is necessary

HOW TO AVOID GETTING INFLUENZA

Practice good health habits, starting today!

- **Wash your hands** frequently with soap and water, or alcohol-based gels. Wash hands for at least 15 seconds.
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** Also, when you are sick, stay away from others to protect them from getting sick also.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze using your arm and not your hand.** Use a disposable tissue and throw it away at once. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Get a flu shot.** Get both the regular flu shot and the 2009 H1N1 flu shot. You can get both flu shots at the same time, but in different arms. Normally flu shots combine the 3 most likely viruses to cause flu that season and the protection from these particular viruses continues for life. If you get a flu shot every year, you are more likely to have immunity from new strains of the flu. The strains of virus that cause influenza infection change almost every year, which is why a different influenza vaccine is recommended each year. The new 2009 H1N1 flu shot only contains one strain of influenza.
- The consequences of not being vaccinated against influenza could endanger your health and the health of those with whom you have contact with, including
 - your coworkers
 - your family
 - your community

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU ARE EXPOSED TO INFLUENZA

- Antivirus medications are available, but are effective only if administered within 24-48 hours after being exposed.
- Call your doctor, go to clinic or hospital only if you normally would do so
- Stay home until **FEVER FREE for 24 hours** without anti-fever medications

WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU BE DOING TO PREPARE AT HOME

- Make a Kit, Make a Plan, Stay Informed
- Stockpile at least 2 weeks of water, food, pet food
- Make it a habit to fill any prescriptions several days before you run out.
- Help elderly neighbors and neighbors with disabilities develop their emergency plans. In our community, in the past, people have managed through difficult times because neighbors helped their neighbors.
- In a pandemic flu, many people could become very sick at the same time. Worksites, schools and day care centers could be forced to close. Think about how you will manage if everyday life is severely disrupted.
- Stay up to date on all your immunizations, especially with flu and pneumonia shots.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO STAY INFORMED

- The Town of Lincoln website for updates at www.lincolnri.org
- Rhode Island Department of Health www.health.ri.gov
- On Twitter: RIDEPTOFHEALTH
- General Questions (401) 222-8022
- www.flu.gov
- www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en
- Listen to the news
- Read newspapers
- The state is now also posting school absenteeism rates on their website daily for the previous day at www.ride.ri.gov/Applications/attendanceReports.aspx. This information will appear daily on the site at 12:01a.m. Lincoln schools are not on this list.