



# Avoiding and Coping with Influenza (Flu)

SSU Student Health Center (SHC)

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## 1. Avoid transmission of and exposure to flu viruses:

- Always cover coughs and sneezes. Use your sleeve, elbow, or a tissue.
- Dispose of used tissues in the trash & wash hands immediately.
- Clean hands often with soap & water or alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Don't share contaminated or personal items with others (e.g. food, drink, utensils, unwashed towels, etc.)
- Keep your living & working areas clean – wipe down faucets, door handles, keyboards, etc.
- Avoid close contact with others who are ill.
- Keep your immune system healthy and ready to fight germs by following a healthy lifestyle.
- **Get seasonal flu vaccine every year.**

## 2. How to tell if you might have influenza (the true flu):

- **Infection with a flu virus is typically a febrile respiratory illness.** Symptoms include sudden onset of chills or fever  $>100^{\circ}$  plus significant cough, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, sometimes sore throat, etc.
- Vomiting &/or diarrhea with no cough or other respiratory symptoms or fever and chills is most likely an intestinal virus or another gastro-intestinal problem, not the flu.
- **Take your temperature with a thermometer.** Fever is a key indicator of flu-like illness and of recovery.
- **Read *Cold or Influenza, Which is It?*** on the Student Health Center Influenza web page.

## 3. What to do if you get flu-like symptoms:

- **Most people otherwise healthy people will recover from an uncomplicated case of influenza without needing a medical visit.**
- **Take good care of yourself** - rest, fluids, food, & acetaminophen or ibuprofen for muscle aches or fever.
- **To aid your recovery & avoid the spread of influenza to others, stay home** and away from other people until you have gone 24 hours or more with no fever or need for fever reducing medicines.
- Notify roommates, housemates, & potential visitors that you are ill with a communicable respiratory illness. Don't share personal items or eating/drinking materials.
- **Wear a surgical mask covering your mouth & nose** if you can't avoid being near others while you are ill, especially if you are coughing or will be within 3-5 feet of other people.
- Change to a new mask daily or when it is soiled. Dispose of your mask directly in the trash after use.
- Notify professors by phone or e-mail to avoid falling behind academically.
- **Antiviral medications have significant side effects of their own** and are indicated only for individuals who have significant underlying medical conditions and have had the flu less than a day or two.
- **If you need medical attention or have concerns, telephone** the Student Health Center or another healthcare provider **before appearing for care** so they can provide guidance or prepare for your arrival if it is determined that you need to be seen.

## 4. Special Circumstances for those with flu-like illness:

- **If you are pregnant or have one or more significant chronic medical conditions** (asthma, diabetes immune suppression, obesity, chronic neuromuscular, cardiovascular or lung disease, etc.) **you are at increased risk of flu complications** and should contact your healthcare provider promptly.
- **Urgent medical attention at a hospital or urgent care center may be warranted for patients with severe illness.** Don't delay seeking medical attention if you develop rapid, difficult breathing, pain or pressure in chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, intense persistent vomiting, several days of fever  $\geq 102^{\circ}$  or if flu-like symptoms improve but then return with high fever & worse cough.

## 5. **Get thermometers, hand sanitizer, & surgical masks** at the Student Health Center or a drug store.

## 6. **Follow CDC Recommendations for flu related topics, see:** <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>