

Stop the flu it starts with you!



INFLUENZA FACT SHEET FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause serious complications, including pneumonia and death. In an average year in the United States

- 5% to 20% of Americans contract influenza
- Influenza kills approximately 36,000 people
- Influenza causes 226,000 hospitalizations

The most vulnerable patient populations are those who are very old or young (65 years or older or <2 years of age) or who have certain medical conditions that increase the risk of complications.

TRANSMISSION

- Common in respiratory droplets generated by coughing or sneezing. Droplets from a cough or sneeze can travel as far as 3 feet.
- Possible by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching the nose, eyes, or mouth.

SYMPTOMS

- Include a high fever, headache, fatigue, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches.
- Last for about a week.
- May not appear for a day or two after a person is infected and contagious, during which time infection could unwittingly be spread to others.

IMPACT

- Influenza outbreaks typically occur in the winter months, especially December and January.
- During outbreaks, staff shortages may develop, and health care workers may be called on to work extra or double shifts while infected workers stay home to recover from the illness.

PREVENTION THROUGH IMMUNIZATION

- The most effective method for preventing influenza is annual influenza immunization.
- Immunization is recommended for health care workers by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to minimize the risk of infection and loss of work time for health care workers and spread of infection to vulnerable patients.
- The virus strains that cause influenza change rapidly, so vaccination or experiencing influenza in a prior year does not protect against infection in the current year.

VACCINE EFFICACY AND SAFETY

- Influenza vaccine is 70% to 90% effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults. It takes about 2 weeks for protection from the vaccine to develop.
- The most common side effect from influenza vaccine is soreness at the injection site lasting a day or two.
- Immunization cannot cause influenza because the vaccine contains either inactivated (killed) or attenuated (weakened) virus.
- Immunization rates in health care workers are low (36% to 42%) despite evidence of the efficacy and safety of the vaccine in preventing illness in staff and patients and in reducing employee absenteeism.

**BY GETTING IMMUNIZED, YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT
ON YOUR HEALTH AND THAT OF YOUR PATIENTS.**



Developed by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
More information is available at www.YouCanStopTheFlu.com