



## **Prepare Now for the Flu Season**

The change in seasons is always a good time to remind ourselves how important it is to stay healthy and to recognize the signs and symptoms of the flu.

### **Key Flu Facts:**

- The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It infects the nose, throat and lungs. In some people it causes mild symptoms, while others experience severe illness.
- The flu spreads through droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. The droplets then land in your mouth or nose and can lead to the flu.
- You can pass the virus to people around you before you even know you are sick and while you are sick. Most healthy adults can infect people a day before they start feeling the symptoms and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick.

### **Symptoms include:**

- Sudden onset of fever (though some people with positive flu swabs occasionally do not have a temp)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Muscle Aches
- Headache
- Fatigue

The flu can lead to other illnesses, such as bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, and sinus infections.

### The Flu Vaccine:

Your best protection against the flu is to get vaccinated, in addition to practicing good hand hygiene (wash frequently).

The Flu vaccine protects against three strains of the flu: Influenza A, H1N1, and Influenza B. It takes two weeks from the time you are vaccinated for you to build up antibodies that protect against the flu.

### Other Tips to Limit Exposure:

- Avoid close contact with others. Limit greetings like handshakes and hugs during cold weather months to prevent catching and spreading illness.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. Use tissues instead of handkerchiefs, which can spread illness if not washed immediately.
- Stay home when you are sick. Even if you don't have the flu, your immune system is compromised and more susceptible to illness.