

## Common Health Message for the Flu

This information has been approved by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Health Officials Committee for use as talking points and for adaptation for use in a variety of public education tools.

### Stop the spread of flu by:

- Washing your hands often
- Covering your face with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze
- Staying home when sick
- Getting vaccinated

### Self-Care at Home

#### If You or a Loved One Gets Sick

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink fluids to prevent dehydration
- Consider taking fever-reducing medication
- Antiviral medication may be prescribed for those at risk for serious problems from the flu. Take them within two (2) days after symptoms start
- Do not go to the Emergency Room unless a real emergency
- Get medical attention fast for trouble breathing, seizures, confusion

#### Fever, headaches, muscle pain

- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol™)\* or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil™)\*.
- Do not give aspirin to children less than 18 years of age unless told by your child's doctor, because it can cause serious problems.
- For fever in a child less than 2 years of age, call your child's doctor.

#### Vomiting and diarrhea

- Drink plenty of water, juices, and fluids like sports drinks and pediatric rehydration fluids (e.g., Pedialyte) to prevent dehydration.
- Avoid coffee, tea, and colas with caffeine because they cause you to lose more fluids.

#### Cough

- Use a cough suppressant\* if coughing bothers your eating or sleeping.
- Use a mask (surgical or procedure) if your doctor or local health department tells you.

#### Congestion

- Use a decongestant.\* Nasal sprays may give relief, but do not use them for more than two (2) to three (3) days.

#### Sore throat

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Suck on throat lozenges.
- Gargle with warm salt water and spit it out.
- Use a humidifier to moisten the air.
- Speak only as needed to protect your voice.

Antivirals\* Your doctor may prescribe antiviral medication\* if you are at high risk for serious problems from the flu.

General care

- Get lots of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco.
- Antiviral medications\* must be started within two (2) days after symptoms start to work well.

\*Follow the directions on the package or talk to your doctor or pharmacist about which products, their side-effects and dose. Use all medications as directed.

Seek Medical Care for Adults\*\*

Call or see a doctor if an adult has:	Go to the emergency room if an adult has/is:
Fever of 100.4F (38C) or higher for 2 days (48 hours).	Breathing which is difficult or painful.
Fever with sore throat, headache, severe earache, stomachache, and/or muscle aches that do not improve.	Feeling short of breath while resting.
Hoarse, barking cough.	Coughing up bloody sputum or phlegm.
A history of heart or lung disease or any chronic disease that requires regular medical care.	Feeling chest pain.
A history of disease or treatment that weakens the immune system.	Having continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea.
	Sleepy and difficult to wake up or is not responding.
	Confused or disoriented.

Seek Medical Care for Children and Teenagers\*\*

Call or see a doctor if your child has:	Go to the emergency room if your child has/is:
Fever of 100.4F (38C) or higher.	Three (3) months of age or younger with fever of 100.4F (38C) or higher.
Hoarse cry, or a barking cough or is pulling on his/her ears.	Breathing which is difficult (that is, wheezing, noisy, too fast/too slow, their muscles pull between the ribs).
Decreased eating and drinking.	Not eating or drinking.
A history of heart or lung disease or any chronic disease that requires regular medical care.	Symptoms such as pale or blue lips, hands, feet, or cold legs.
A history of disease or treatment that weakens the immune system.	Having continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea.
Prolonged crying and cannot be calmed.	Not urinating – for babies, no wet diaper in 8 hours.
Decreased activity, no interest in playing.	Sleeping more than normal, is difficult to wake up, is confused, or is not responding.
Fever with sore throat, headache, stomachache, earache, and/or muscle aches.	Having seizures.
A medical condition that requires taking aspirin regularly.	Signs of pain including headache, stiff neck, and is sensitive to light.

\*\*Call or see a doctor any time you feel uncomfortable how your child or the adult is looking or acting.