



Questions & Answers about SEASONAL INFLUENZA

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and RISD recognize that parents and school staff are concerned about the flu, particularly its effects on children. Schools are instrumental in keeping the community healthy by taking actions such as teaching proper hand washing and coughing techniques, providing flu prevention information and being vigilant about cleaning and disinfecting surfaces such as door handles, faucets, and clinic cots. The following are some answers to questions commonly asked by parents and school staff:

WHAT IS THE FLU?

- The flu is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the lungs, nose and throat
- Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and sometimes, can lead to death
- Each year in the United States:
 - 5-20 percent of Americans fall ill to the flu
 - Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu, and they frequently spread the virus to others
- Young children are at the greatest risk for developing serious flu complications, as well as the elderly and those with certain health conditions

HOW DOES FLU SPREAD?

- There are two ways to get the flu. Usually flu is spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Occasionally, people can get the flu from touching a germ-infested surface

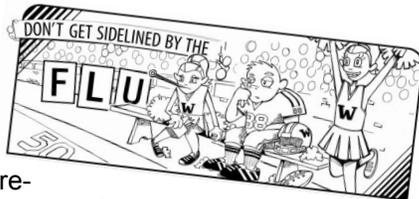
WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF FLU?

Often we get confused about the symptoms of the flu and how they are different from a common cold. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, with symptoms that are much more intense. Knowing the symptoms of the flu is important and will help you act quickly to get your child feeling better faster

- **Common symptoms of flu include:** high fever, severe headache, muscle and body aches, exhaustion and dry cough
 - Children often have additional flu symptoms that are rare in adults, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
- **Symptoms of a common cold include:** stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and hacking cough

SIMPLE STEPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CHILD HEALTHY

1. According to the CDC, the best way to prevent your child from getting the flu is to take him/her to **get a flu vaccine**. Seasonal flu vaccines are approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. It is especially recommended for people who are considered to be at a high risk for complications from the flu, such as young children, pregnant women, people older than 50 years, and the people who live with or take care of those at higher risk.



2. Besides vaccination, there are several healthy habits that can help prevent the flu:
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
 - When sneezing or coughing, cough/sneeze into your sleeve or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and dispose of the tissue in a proper trash receptacle
 - Keep fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth
 - Avoid sharing drinks, water bottles or silverware with others
 - Avoid close contact with those who are ill or have flu-like symptoms
 - Open the windows of the house from time to time to allow air to circulate
 - Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, toys and other commonly shared items
 - **Keep sick children home from school until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines**

WILL ANTIBIOTICS HELP?

No. Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses, so taking an antibiotic when you have a cold or the flu will not cure the infection or keep others from catching the illness.

- However, a doctor can prescribe a different medication, called an antiviral – that can actually prevent other members of the household from catching the flu, and possibly reduce the duration of symptoms when taken promptly (within 12-48 hours after flu symptoms begin) and as instructed.
- Do **NOT** use aspirin or aspirin products in children or teenagers with the flu because it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.

DON'T TAKE THE FLU LYING DOWN

- If you are concerned about your child's flu symptoms, call your doctor early.
- Call your doctor immediately if your child has a chronic disease, or if he/she experiences:
 - Fast or troubled breathing
 - Bluish skin color
 - Not waking up or interacting
 - Increased irritability
 - Inability to keep fluids down
 - Fever with a rash
- If your child has the flu, it is important for them to stay home from school, rest, and drink plenty of fluids
- Additionally, notify the school nurse if your child has the flu. Monitoring flu incidence at school will help keep students, faculty and our community healthy