Flu/Influenza

HS04-066D (09-10)

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

The seasonal flu (influenza) is a contagious disease that is caused by the influenza virus. It attacks the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs) in humans. The flu is contagious. A person can spread the flu starting one day before they feel sick. Adults can continue to pass the flu virus to others for another three - seven days after symptoms start. Children can pass the virus for longer than seven days. Symptoms start one - four days after the virus enters the body. Some persons can be infected with the flu virus, but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons can still spread the virus to others. The flu is different from a cold; it usually comes on suddenly and can include the following symptoms:

- fever;
- headache;
- fatigue (can be extreme);
- dry cough;
- nasal congestion; and
- body aches.

Avoding the Flu

There are several actions you can take to prevent exposure to the flu virus.

- Practice good hygiene by washing your hands frequently.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Get good nutrition and be sure to eat five fruits and vegetables each day.
- Exercise regularly.
- Don't go to work when you have a fever or any other flu symptoms.
- Make sure that everyone in your family uses their own toothbrush, toothpaste and cup.
- Avoid shaking hands with other people.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel to reduce risk of exposure after touching door handles, shopping cart handles, restroom facilities, and other places where there is a lot of public contact with surfaces.
- Talk to your doctor about using natural remedies like a multiple vitamin, vitamin C, vitamin D3, and zinc to boost your immune system.
- Avoiding using alcohol and tobacco.

Treatment

Consult your doctor regarding diagnosis and treatment of the flu. Common treatments that your doctor may prescrible include:

- Drinking plenty of fluids.
- Taking ibuprofen or acetaminophen to keep the fever down.
- Limiting contact with other people.

Many people use the term "stomach flu" to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea that are not caused by the flu virus, may be caused by many different viruses, bacteria, or even parasites. While vomiting, diarrhea and being sick to the stomach can sometimes be related to the flu, particularly in children, these are rarely the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease, not a stomach or intestinal disease. A doctor can perform tests on a person in the first few days of illness to diagnosis if they have the flu.

Let's review the preventive measures to stay healthy, especially during the flu season: stick to a healthy diet; limit your intake of alcohol and tobaccor; get regular exercise (even just walking around the block); sleep for seven to eight hours each night, and remember to wash your hands!

The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI-DWC) also offers several; free health safety publications online at www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/safety/videoresources, including: Chickenpox Fact Sheet, Common Cold Fact Sheet, Gastroenteritis Fact Sheet, Hand Hygiene Fact Sheet, MRSA Fact Sheet, SARS Fact Sheet, Smallpox Fact Sheet, Tuberculosis Fact Sheet, Tuberculosis Safety Training Program, Viral Hepatitis C Take 5 for Safety, Waterborne Illnesses Prevention Fact Sheet, and West Nile Virus Fact Sheet.

This Take 5 was published with information from the Centers for Disease Control and TDI-DWC, and is considered accurate at the time of publication.

The TDI-DWC features a free occupational safety and health audiovisual loan library. Call 512-804-4620 for more information or visit our website at www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html.