

GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE FLU AND OTHER RESPIRATORY VIRUSES

-Respiratory viruses spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

-Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way. Stay home if you get sick. Stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

- All respiratory viruses (influenza, adenovirus, coxsackie virus, parainfluenza virus, rhinovirus...) give similar symptoms: fever, chills, sore throat, headache, body aches, runny nose, congestion and cough. In the past weeks, several students have been ill with these symptoms, and although the in office test for influenza doesn't always pick up novel H1N1 Influenza A (AKA "swine flu"), we have seen no positive tests at all. And so, at the moment it appears that we may have several viruses among our students giving Flu-like illnesses, one of which could be the novel flu virus.

- People at risk for more serious illnesses should be seen by a medical provider: people 65 years or older, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease (other than only high blood pressure), kidney or liver disease), pregnant women, and young children. Fortunately everyone on campus who has been ill has recovered without complications within 5-7 days.

- If you are living in the residence halls and become ill, notify your RA, who will help you coordinate with a "flu buddy" to get your meals to you. We prefer that you stay isolated in your room until 24 hours after your fever resolves so that you minimize spreading the virus to others. Remember to continue to cover your cough and practice frequent handwashing even after the fever resolves. See the attached handout for suggestions of over the counter medications for symptoms.

- VACCINES: the seasonal Flu vaccine should be shipped next week. I will notify everyone via email and we will put up posters when it is here. The cost for students will be \$20, which can be billed to their business office account.

The University of Dallas will pay for staff and employees, as usual.

- VACCINES: the novel H1N1 flu virus vaccine will be shipped by the state in mid October. We don't know how much we will receive, and priority will be given to anyone who is in the high risk categories, people who live with those at high risk, and students living in the residence halls.

The following website is a great resource if you have any questions -

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

or feel free to call me at the clinic

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Medications for Respiratory Infections

What causes "colds" - i.e. respiratory infections?

Respiratory viruses (hundreds of them), such as rhinovirus, adenovirus, coxsackievirus, parainfluenza virus, and influenza virus ("the Flu") cause symptoms such as sore throat, runny nose/congestion, cough, fever, body aches and headache. The Flu tends to be a more severe illness with all symptoms hitting within 24 hours; whereas with other viruses, symptoms build up over several days.

How long do symptoms last?

Symptoms usually peak Day 3-5 of the illness and resolve by Day 7-10.

Are antibiotics needed?

Antibiotics are anti-bacterial agents, and thus not helpful for viral respiratory infections. There is an antiviral agent for the Flu that can help shorten the course if it is started within 48 hours.

What medications can help with symptoms?

Saline (salt water) nose sprays and Vicks or Metholatum help to clear mucus and congestion.

If you want to try over the counter medications:

Sore throat: acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) or throat lozenges

Name on Clinic sample: Extra Strength Non-Aspirin

Runny nose: antihistamines (look for "amine" in the name), such as chlorpheniramine

Name on Clinic sample: Medicidin D (also acetaminophen in this medication)

take 1 or 2 pills every 4-6 hours (can cause drowsiness, so try 1 every 4 hrs at first)

Stuffy nose/congestion: decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine. You will need to sign this out with the pharmacist (no prescription needed) as it has been removed from store shelves.

Unfortunately, while the decongestant phenylephrine (which is in cold meds on the shelf) works well as an eye drop or nose spray, it is not absorbed well in pill form and thus is not very effective.

Name on Clinic sample: Pseudoephedrine

take 1 or 2 pills every 4-6 hrs (can cause jitteriness/insomnia - try 1 every 4 hrs at first)

Cough: expectorants (guaifenesin) can help break up and clear mucus, and cough suppressants (dextromethorphan) can help with dry cough, e.g. Robitussin or Mucinex

Name on Clinic sample: Silixin or Mucinex D

take 2 Silixin every 4-5 hours or Mucinex D every 12 hours