

## **INFLUENZA**

### **What is influenza?**

Influenza, also called the flu, is a contagious viral infection of the nose and throat. Influenza is a serious illness that leads to approximately 20,000 hospitalizations, most in children younger than 5 years of age, and an average of 100 pediatric deaths in children less than 18 years old, nearly half of whom were previously healthy. Anyone can get influenza, but infection rates are highest among children (20-30% annually). Influenza is not the same as the “stomach flu,” which is a viral infection of the stomach and intestines that will typically go away on its own within a few days.

### **How is influenza spread?**

Influenza is spread easily from person to person; when someone who has it sneezes, coughs or even talks, the virus passes into the air and can be breathed in by anyone nearby. People can also become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with the influenza virus on it and then touch their mouth or nose.

### **What are the symptoms of influenza?**

Influenza can come on very suddenly and usually includes a high fever with fatigue, aches, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, and muscle pain. Children may have additional symptoms such as ear ache, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

### **Who should be vaccinated?**

CDC now recommends an annual influenza vaccination for all people over the age of **6 months**.

### **Where can individuals get vaccinated?**

Parents and caregivers should contact their pediatrician or other healthcare professional to request the influenza vaccine for their children, themselves, and other household contacts. Local hospitals, health clinics, and retail stores including pharmacies all offer vaccines. Some employers also hold vaccination clinics.

(Adapted from <http://www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/flu-facts> on 9/22/17 courtesy of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases).

***Take everyday actions to stop the spread of germs. Wash your hands often with soap and water and cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you become sick, limit your contact with others to keep them from becoming infected. If your child has fever, vomiting or diarrhea, keep the child home for 24 hours after the last onset to prevent the spread of illness.***

We appreciate your help in this matter!

Iberville Parish School Nurses