



# WELLNESS Newsletter

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This publication is brought to you by the District Wellness Council, which is dedicated to educating Rush-Henrietta families about important topics to keep your children healthy.

## Influenza: What you need to know to keep healthy

According to the Centers for Disease Control, influenza (flu) is defined as a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu infection can result in hospitalization or death. Young children, older people, and those with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year.

### What is influenza (also called flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

### Signs and symptoms of flu

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

*\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

### How flu spreads

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

### Period of contagiousness

You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

## **Resources & Important Links**

### **Centers for Disease Control**

[www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/flu-activitysurv.htm>

### **Monroe County Department of Health**

<http://www2.monroecounty.gov/health-flu>

### **Flu Surveillance**

<https://www2.monroecounty.gov/health-clinicians.php>

### **Immunization Clinic**

585-753-5150

### **Flu Prevention Partners**

<http://www.wpv.com>

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## How serious is the flu?

Flu is unpredictable and how severe it is can vary widely from one season to the next depending on many things, including:

- what flu viruses are spreading,
- how much flu vaccine is available
- when vaccine is available
- how many people get vaccinated, and
- how well the flu vaccine is matched to flu viruses that are causing illness.

Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu. This includes older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease).

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. During a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.

## Complications of flu

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes and even death. Pediatric deaths are defined as flu-associated deaths that occur in people younger than 18 years.

CDC began tracking flu-associated pediatric deaths in the past decade and made them nationally reportable in the 2005 influenza season. Approximately 50 to 100 children die annually related to influenza. Approximately 90 percent of these children had not received a flu vaccine. In general, about 60 percent of the children that die from influenza have a pre-existing condition to their health, but the remaining 40 percent have no recognized chronic health problem.

## Prevent seasonal flu: Get vaccinated

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season. Yearly flu vaccination should begin soon after flu vaccine is available, and ideally by October. However, getting vaccinated even later can be protective, as long as flu viruses are circulating. While seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, it is best that people get vaccinated so they are protected before influenza begins spreading in their community.

## Flu Vaccine Clinics at Rush Henrietta Central School District

For the past several years, our district in collaboration with Flu Prevention Partners, hosts several flu clinics for both staff and any resident of the school district. In September and October, more than 500 flu shots were administered, which was an increase of 70 percent from the previous season!

Influenza illness has only begun to make its way into Monroe County, so there is still plenty of time to get vaccinated. Many of the local pharmacies provide flu shots as well as the Monroe County Health Department Immunization clinic.