

## THE FLU & YOU

Key organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), monitor the progression of all forms of influenza around the world. They also provide recommendations to health care providers, communities, and schools based on their observations and research.

Health Services, along with Calvin's Pandemic Influenza Steering Committee, monitors their findings to provide guidance to individuals and the college community. We encourage you to return to this site, and particularly the links provided here, for the latest information. If you have additional questions, or if you are a student and have questions about your own influenza-like illness, feel free to call us at 616-526-6187 or email us at [health@calvin.edu](mailto:health@calvin.edu).

## FLU FACTS

### The Extended Flu Family

Influenza ("flu") is the name given to contagious respiratory illnesses caused by a variety of influenza viruses. Flu can cause mild to severe illness, even death. Every year in the United States, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes. Some people, such as older individuals, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk for serious flu complications.

*Seasonal influenza* is caused by type A and B viruses. They are responsible for global seasonal flu epidemics each year. In the U.S., this influenza is experienced during the winter months primarily. Most people have some immunity to seasonal flu. A vaccine is available annually.

*Novel H1N1 flu* is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in the U.S. in April 2009 and continues to spread around the world. Information about H1N1 influenza, which will continue to evolve over time, may be found at a regularly updated website: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

*Avian influenza (AI)* is caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. There is a mild form of avian influenza in birds which causes few problems. Highly pathogenic H5N1 is deadly to domestic fowl (e.g. chickens) and humans, and can be transmitted from birds to humans. There is virtually no human immunity and limited vaccine availability.

### Getting Personal: Transmitting the Virus

Influenza viruses are transmitted from **person to person** when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air onto the mouth or nose of others nearby. The virus may also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object, and then touches their own (or someone else's) mouth or nose before washing their hands. This knowledge is the basis for the recommendations offered every year for reducing the spread of influenza.

## Contagiousness

Adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 days **after** becoming sick (children longer than 7 days). **Therefore you may be able to pass the flu virus to someone else before you have symptoms of illness**, as well as while you are sick.

## FACING the FLU

**Can I Avoid the Flu?** Most of us encounter people who are ill every day. A healthy immune system usually keeps us from getting sick. Certainly, we do our immune systems a favor when we take care of ourselves well. To reduce the spread of influenza, we advise the following:

- **Wash your hands – often.** Minimally, after eating, coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, and personal care activities. Use vigorous friction for 20 seconds. If possible, turn the faucet off with the paper towel used to dry your hands. Alcohol-based cleaners are effective if you cannot get to soap/water.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, mouth, and nose with your hands.
- **Avoid close contact** (less than 6 feet) with sick people if possible.

An effective, proactive way to prevent the flu is through vaccination. Information about the seasonal flu vaccine is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/flu vaccine.htm>.

**Symptoms of the Flu:** The symptoms of seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu are very similar. They include fever (at least 100.4 F° or 38 C°), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A measured temperature is very useful when communicating with health care providers. Residence hall “deskies” have disposable thermometers in first aid kits. A number of people with the H1N1 flu virus have also reported diarrhea and vomiting; this is unusual for seasonal flu.

**Common Cold or Influenza?** Although the “common cold”, also a viral illness, can cause a runny or stuffy nose, headache, and sore throat, people with influenza generally feel much more ill. The fatigue, chills, and body aches of flu are more uncomfortable and often debilitating. The common cold is not associated with fever. More information about the common cold is found at <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/antibiotic-use/URI/colds.html>

**What do you do if you get flu-like symptoms?** General information about how to care for yourself or others is found at these locations: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm> and [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm). In general,

- Stay in your room or at home as much as possible. Rest. Sleep. Drink fluids.
- Avoid travel, work, and school until your temperature has been normal for at least 24 hours (37 C° or 98.6 F°) without fever-reducing medication.
- Use over the counter pain relievers, as you normally would, for pain. Avoid the use of products containing salicylate, such as aspirin and PeptoBismol, if you are younger than 19 years old because of the rare but serious illness, Reye’s syndrome.
- If you have diabetes, asthma, kidney, lung, or heart disease, are pregnant or immunosuppressed (due to medication or other illness), AND have an influenza-like illness, we recommend that you see a medical care provider for additional treatment for

the influenza. Calvin students in this situation are encouraged to call, or schedule an appointment to see a provider at, Health Services (526-6187).

Special guidance for women who are pregnant and have influenza is found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/pregnant.htm>

## **U.S. and GLOBAL TRENDS**

Updated information about the prevalence, etc. of H1N1 internationally may be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/updates/international/> and state-by-state update for the U.S. at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm>

Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> for travel health information and updates.