



**Dickinson-Iron District Health
Department**

*“Serving the community since 1936 in Health
Protection, Health Education and
Disease Prevention”*

Preventing the Spread of Influenza

Preventing the Spread of Influenza (Flu)



Most persons with the flu will be able to remain at home while they are sick. They can care for themselves or be cared for by others who live in the household. This information is intended to help recognize the symptoms of influenza and care for ill persons in the home, both during a typical influenza season and during an influenza pandemic.

At the outset of an influenza pandemic, a vaccine will not be available for several months. However, it’s still a good idea to get seasonal flu vaccine (a shot or nasal mist) to protect from seasonal flu viruses.

For more information on seasonal flu vaccine in Dickinson and Iron Counties, please call (906) 774-1868 or (906) 265-9913 or go to www.didhd.org.

Know the *symptoms of Influenza*, which may include:

- Sudden onset of illness
- Fever higher than 100.4 degree Fahrenheit
- Chills Cough
- Headache Sore throat
- Stuffy nose Muscle aches
- Feeling of weakness
- Diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain and/or exhaustion occur more commonly in children

Prevent the Spread of Illness in the Home

Flu can spread easily from person to person therefore, anyone living in or visiting a home where someone has influenza can become infected. For this reason, it is important to take steps to prevent the spread of influenza to others in the home.

What Caregivers Can Do

Caregivers need to separate flu patients from other people as much as possible. When practical, the ill person should stay in a separate room away from other persons. Other people living in the home should limit contact with the ill person as much as possible. One person in the household should be the main caregiver for the ill person. Ideally, this caregiver should be healthy and not have medical conditions that would put him or her at risk of severe influenza disease.

Medical conditions as much as considered “high-risk” include the following:

- ✚ Pregnancy Diabetes
- ✚ Heart problems Kidney Disease

- ✚ Disease or treatment that suppresses the immune system Age over 65
- ✚ Chronic lung diseases

Watch for Influenza Symptoms in other Household Members

If possible, contact your health care provider if you have questions about caring for the ill person. However, it may be difficult to contact your usual health care provider during an influenza pandemic.

Wearing surgical masks (with ties) or procedure masks (with ear loops) may be useful in decreasing spread of influenza when worn by the person and/or caregiver during close contact (within 3 feet). If masks are recommended they must be worn at all times when in close contact with the person with the flu to be useful. Throw away mask after each use. Wearing gloves and gowns **are not** recommended for household members providing care in the home.



What everyone in the Household can do:

- Wash hands with soap and water, or if soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based cleanser/hand sanitizer (like Purell® or a store-brand) after each contact with a person with the flu or with objects in the area where the person is located. **WASHING YOUR HANDS IS THE SINGLE BEST PREVENTIVE MEASURE FOR EVERYONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD.**
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth without first washing your hands for 20 seconds (sing *Happy Birthday* twice). Wash hands before and after using the bathroom.
- Wash dirty dishes either in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap. It's not necessary to separate eating utensils used by a person with influenza.
- Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry used by a person with influenza from other household laundry. Do not hold or carry the laundry close to your body or face, in order to avoid contamination. Wash hands with soap and water after handling soiled laundry.
- Place tissues used by the ill person in a bag and throw it away with other household trash. Consider placing a bag at the bedside for this purpose.
- Clean counters, surfaces and other areas in the home regularly using everyday cleaning products.