University of Louisville
Influenza (Flu)
Information Sheet

There has been a sudden rise in flu cases throughout the United States. In Kentucky, the flu activity is now considered to be widespread. Many of the reported cases are H1N1 influenza, which appears to be making a resurgence this year. Fortunately, this year’s flu vaccine targets the H1N1 strain. How can you protect yourself from getting the flu? And how can you take care of yourself if you happen to get the flu?

What is 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. The H1N1 flu strain is particularly hazardous to younger people, especially those with asthma or other chronic diseases.

How is Influenza spread?
Flu viruses spread mainly by droplets from an infected person who coughs, sneezes, or talks. 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 his or her own mouth, eyes or nose.

How serious in the Flu?
Flu is unpredictable and its severity can vary depending on:
- the strain of flu virus
- whether you were vaccinated for seasonal flu
- whether you have asthma or another chronic medical condition

Should I be vaccinated?
Vaccines provide protection within 10-14 days. The injectable flu vaccine is a dead virus and cannot cause the flu. The intranasal FluMist is a live, but weakened, virus and it is also engineered so it does not cause influenza. You may experience soreness in your arm, mild fatigue or mild flulike symptoms for 1-2 days following vaccination, but these will be minimal as compared to symptoms of the flu itself.

What should I do to prevent the spread of flu?
The best ways to minimize spreading the flu are:
- GET VACCINATED! (Students, faculty, and staff may receive a free flu shot at Campus Health Services.) Shots also are available for a fee from their family physician or local pharmacies.
- Encourage friends and family to be vaccinated
- Stay away from people who are ill
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze
- Cough into your sleeve rather than your hand
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer regularly, especially after blowing your nose or touching shared surfaces
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Clean and disinfect commonly used and shared items and surfaces
Avoid spreading flu to others by staying home from work and class when you are ill.

**What are the symptoms of Flu?**
- Usually, symptoms of flu are sudden in onset and may include:
  - Fever over 101.1 degrees
  - Stuffy nose
  - Nausea, loss of appetite
  - Chills and sweats
  - Fatigue and muscle aches, especially in your back, arms and legs
  - Cough
  - Headache
  - Diarrhea

**What should I do if I get sick?**
- Stay home or in your residence hall room. Do not go to class. (Contact your professor if you have the flu and are unable to attend class.) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay at home for 24 hours after your fever is gone.
- Avoid contact with other people (except to seek medical care)
- Cover your nose and mouth if you sneeze. Continue to wash your hands or use hand sanitizers.

**What can I do to feel better?**
- Rest and drink lots of fluids
- Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever, body aches, and headache
- For sore throat, gargle with warm salt water, use throat lozenges, drink herbal tea with honey
- Use saline (salt water) nasal spray
- Don’t drink alcohol. Avoid smoking and second hand smoke.

**Where can I get more information?**
- Campus Health - [http://louisville.edu/campushealth/](http://louisville.edu/campushealth/)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm)