

Southwest Michigan is experiencing simultaneous outbreaks of influenza, Norovirus (acute viral gastroenteritis) and common cold infections. The flu has come earlier and hit harder than in most years, including hitting young adults and children. It has already resulted in both young adult and pediatric deaths in Michigan. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the current influenza outbreak began much earlier this year and has been more severe than any in recent memory.

Here are a few things we would like to remind you of:

**If you have had the flu vaccine:**

- You have cut your risk of getting the flu, if exposed, by about 90% (but not by 100%).
- You have no protection against either the acute gastroenteritis or the common cold viruses since it is not part of a flu vaccine.
- If you think you have the flu despite your vaccination (high fever, body aches, sore throat, cough, etc.), early treatment with antiviral medications like Tamiflu will make you feel better and recover sooner. Call your physician and ask about possible treatment right away.

**If you have not had the flu vaccine:**

- **It is not too late to get the flu vaccination.** If you don't have a severe contraindication to the flu shot, it is highly recommended that receive one as soon as possible.
- Wearing a mask may help keep both you and those you have contact with healthy.

**If you get sick:**

- Stay home and out of public areas as much as possible
- If you get the flu (high fever, body aches, sore throat, cough, etc.), you may be a candidate for antiviral medication treatment that will make you recover more quickly.
- If you are exposed to the flu (either at work or at home), you can potentially prevent the disease by using Tamiflu. Speak with your physician.

**If you want to stay well:**

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water - especially after sneezing, coughing or coming in contact with others who have symptoms. Hand sanitizer is acceptable, but soap and water is preferred.
- Remember the gastroenteritis virus (Norovirus) is relatively resistant to alcohol-based hand sanitizers. **Use soap and water liberally to wash your hands.**
- Avoid touching your mucous membranes (mouth, nose, and eyes) at all times, unless you have just washed your hands.
- Be just as careful at home and when in the community as you are at work.