



Guest Column

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Prevention tips for cold and flu season

Winter and early spring is the season we expect to see an increase in the number of people experiencing colds and flu, some infectious and some not. This year has been no different but the Galveston County Health District is glad to report there have been no "outbreaks" from any one cause more than expected this time of year.

Influenza virus infections have been reported throughout Texas and certainly in Galveston County. The influenza virus is only one of many causes of upper respiratory symptoms such as coughing, runny nose, and drainage. Why some people get sick and others do not depend on the cause and many complex factors, such as underlying medical conditions as well as personal preventive practices.

I recommend good health habits for preventing the spread of respiratory infections. Here are a few.

Get a flu shot every year. A flu shot may be given to anyone, but is especially recommended for children aged 6 months to 19 years, pregnant women, people 50 years of age and older, anyone with certain chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma or COPD, people who live in nursing homes and long term care facilities, and for people who live with or care for those who are at risk.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

When you cough or sneeze cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or direct your germs into your elbow instead of your hand. After cough and sneezing, wash your hands or use a sanitizer. This helps prevent those around you from getting sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Try to practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

See your doctor if symptoms persist. Generally, you can beat the common cold and flu without a trip to the doctor, but if symptoms last more than 10 days or worsen and include fever, neck pain and severe headache, see your health care provider immediately.

For information about types of conditions reported in Galveston County you can call our Epidemiology office at (409) 938-2322 or visit www.gchd.org.

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