

Flu Cases Confirmed in Area

Written by Steve Frank
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If this won't get you to get a flu shot, you may just be destined for the bug. Appalachian Regional Healthcare System (ARHS) reports today that they have received reports of confirmed influenza cases in the region, and ARHS is urging community members to get their flu vaccines if you have not done so already. They point out that the flu vaccine takes up to two weeks to reach full effectiveness, so the sooner you are vaccinated the better.

This flu season, ARHS has implemented the iCare campaign to increase the number of ARHS employees who receive their annual vaccine. Those employees unable to take the vaccine are required to wear a surgical mask when in a patient care area. The masks are not a sign that these employees have the influenza virus, but rather that they care about protecting those around them.

The flu virus spreads mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may catch the flu by touching something infected with the virus and then touching their mouth or nose.

There are several things you can do to prevent catching or spreading the flu:

- Protect yourself, your family and your community
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.

Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- If you get sick with flu, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from making them sick.
- Get the recommended seasonal flu vaccine.

Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

Most people recover after about a week without lasting effects.

Seek emergency medical care if you or a family member has any of these symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen

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- Sudden onset of dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- In babies, bluish or gray skin color, lack of responsiveness or extreme irritation

ARHS is working diligently to prevent the spread of the flu and appreciates any assistance the public can provide. For more information about the flu, visit <http://www.flu.gov/>.