Influenza

Students may call the Health Center at 289-8064 for an appointment for a flu shot, while supply lasts. Cost is $15, and it may be billed to your student account. Flu shots are also available from off-campus providers.

What is influenza?
Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus.

What are the symptoms?
Symptoms start suddenly with fever (>100.5° F), weakness and fatigue, dry cough, headache, and body aches. Other flu symptoms may include sore eyes, runny nose, sore throat, sneezing, congestion, and burning chest pain. Infrequently, vomiting and diarrhea may occur. Symptoms are most severe for the first two to three days of the illness, and it may take five to ten days to resolve.

How is it diagnosed?
Rapid influenza tests or “flu tests” can be done in the Health Center and provide results in 15 minutes. Tests do not need to be done on all patients with influenza symptoms. During peak influenza activity, only 50-70% of patients with the illness will actually test positive. Once influenza activity has been documented in the community or on our campus, a diagnosis of influenza may be made for patients based on signs and symptoms alone. Appropriate treatment may be started without doing a flu test or even if the flu test is negative and other causes of illness are not suspected.

How is the flu spread?
The flu virus lives in the nose and throat. Coughing, sneezing, nose blowing, kissing, sharing drinks, and hand-to-hand contact spread the virus. Flu symptoms usually start one to three days after exposure to the virus. Adults are infectious from one day before the onset of symptoms to approximately 5 days after symptom onset.

What can you do about the flu?
Prevention is the best medicine! Wash your hands frequently. Get a flu shot every fall. Once an outbreak hits campus, it is still not too late to be vaccinated.

Antibiotics are not effective against viruses; for individuals at high risk for severe complications from influenza, there are prescription anti-viral medications that may help lessen the severity of flu symptoms and shorten the course of the illness. Call the UR Dial-a-Nurse at 804-289-8700 for more information.

To recover more quickly and help prevent spread of the virus, rest at least 24-48 hours after your temperature returns to normal and do not go to class or social events. Drink fluids such as fruit juices, tea, soup, Jell-O, and Gatorade. Hot drinks may help break up congestion. Avoid caffeinated drinks (may be dehydrating) and milk (may increase congestion).

For fever, aches, and pains, take either ibuprofen (such as Motrin or Advil) with food or Acetaminophen (such as regular strength Tylenol). DO NOT TAKE ASPIRIN. For nasal/sinus congestion, take pseudoephedrine (such as Sudafed) as needed. For cough, take an expectorant/suppressant cough medicine (such as Robitussin DM).

Practice good hygiene! Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands frequently. Avoid attending class or social activities while ill to prevent spreading your illness.

When should I contact the Student Health Center or seek medical attention?
- Persistent temperature over 103° F
- Shortness of breath, chest pain, or blood-tinged sputum
- Persistent nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Thick yellow or green discharge from the nose, sinuses, or ears

If you have a headache with fever or are unsure about your illness, call Dial-A-Nurse at (804) 289-8700. If the SHC is closed, call Campus Police at (804) 289-8911 in the case of an emergency or seek other medical help promptly.

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28 Westhampton Way
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Phone (804) 289-8064
Dial-A-Nurse (804) 289-8700
Fax (804) 287-6466

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