FLU
FACT SHEET

FOUNDATION
for a **Healthy North Dakota**

What is Influenza (flu)?

Influenza (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. On average, at least 2,800 North Dakotans contract flu each year. This number is based on lab confirmed cases and actual cases occurring in North Dakota are likely higher.

What are the symptoms of flu?

People who have flu often feel some or all of the following symptoms:

- fever or feeling feverish/chills
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

How does flu spread and who is most at risk for a severe case of flu?

Flu can spread when someone with the flu coughs, sneezes, or talks and the respiratory droplets produced from these actions lands in the mouths or noses of people nearby. Flu may also spread through direct contact, such as shaking hands with an infected person. Not often though, flu can also spread when a person touches a surface or object that has the flu virus on it and then touches their face.

Some people, such as people 65 years and older, young children, and people with chronic conditions like heart disease, asthma, or diabetes are at a greater risk for developing serious flu complications.

How may I prevent the flu?

Flu season is normally October through May and typically peaks sometime between January and March. A yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. Everyone 6 months of age or older should get a flu vaccine before the end of October, or as soon as possible after October. It can take up to two weeks to have the full benefit from the vaccine.

In addition to the vaccine, you can help prevent the spread of influenza by washing your hands often, staying home when sick, and not touching your hands to your face.

Why vaccinate against the flu?

During seasons when flu vaccine viruses are similar to circulating flu viruses, flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor with flu by 40% to 60%. Getting vaccinated may also not only protect you from serious illness, but also people around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

Be sure to ask your healthcare provider or contact your clinic, local public health office, or pharmacist about the flu vaccine. You can also scan the following QR code for more information on the vaccine and where to get it.

Resources:

1. Influenza. Health and Human Services North Dakota. (n.d.). https://www.hhs.nd.gov/health/influenza
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, November 21). Influenza (flu). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/Flu/Index.htm