

How Flu Spreads

With the flu running rampant this fall, here is a quick review of how the flu is spread and what we can do to stop the spread of germs.*

How the flu spreads

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with the flu. Germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like tables, doorknobs, and desks. Most healthy people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days **after** becoming sick. **That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.**

How to Stop the Spread of Germs

Stay home when you are sick.

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

Avoid or limit close contact.

During this flu season, many churches have temporarily stopped the usual shaking of hands to avoid getting or passing on the flu in their congregations. This is why our the parish nurses have advised greeting each other verbally rather than shaking hands during this season when many people are 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.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

Clean your hands often

It is recommended that you wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing "Jesus Loves Me" twice (or once if you know all three verses!). When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used.. It is important to remember though, that after using hand sanitizers, you should always wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can.

Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Here's hoping that you and your family will have a flu-free season!

*Information taken from the Michigan Department of Community Health website