

## **2011 Flu Season FAQ**

### **Q: What is the flu?**

A: Influenza (flu) is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. Every year, 5-20% of Americans are infected. Flu is different from the common cold. Each year, 225,000 Americans are hospitalized and 24,000 die due to influenza.

### **Q: How do people get the flu?**

A: Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **Q: What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?**

A: The symptoms of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

### **Q: Am I at high risk for flu?**

Several groups are especially at risk: the very young or old; people with chronic diseases of the heart, lungs, blood, or kidneys; asthmatics; diabetics; and people with weakened immune systems.

### **Q: Who should get the flu vaccine?**

A: For the first time, this year the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is recommending that every American ages of 6 months and above receive the influenza vaccine. Talk to your doctor or health care provider to see if you are recommended to get immunized against the flu.

### **Q: Should I get the flu shot or the flu mist (nasal spray)?**

A: Based on your response to some simple questions about your health, the clinic doctor or nurse who assists you will determine which form of vaccine you should receive.

### **Q: How much does the flu vaccine cost?**

A: Baltimore City Health Department makes the vaccine widely available free of charge. If you receive Medicare, you are encouraged to bring your Medicare Card. However, you can still receive the vaccine without the card.

### **Q: Is H1N1 still a threat? Will this year's seasonal flu vaccine also protect me against the H1N1 flu virus?**

A: Yes. Protection against the H1N1 virus is included in this year's seasonal flu vaccine. Most people only need one vaccine to be fully covered. Some children under age 10 may require a second booster shot. Consult your child's pediatrician for further guidance.

### **Q: How can I avoid getting the flu?**

A: The single best way to avoid catching the flu is by getting vaccinated. Vaccination is safe, effective, and fast. In addition, you should also wash your hands frequently – especially after sneezing or coughing. Keep tissues handy, use them, and throw them away afterwards. If you don't have a tissue, cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

### **Q: What should I do if I get sick?**

A: If become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people. If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

### **Q: If I get the flu, how long should I stay home and not go to work?**

A: If you do get sick with the flu, don't go to school or work until you are symptom free for 24 hours.

### **Q: Where can I get more information about the flu, the vaccine and Health Department clinics?**

A: For a schedule of BCHD flu clinics, go to [www.baltimorehealth.org/tikeschedule.html](http://www.baltimorehealth.org/tikeschedule.html), or call the Bureau of Immunization at 410-396-4454.