

Your child has the Flu: What Now?

Keeping a sick child home from school or day care is always important to help control the spread of viruses; but for many parents, taking time off from work is difficult. How can parents tell if their child is ill enough to stay home? How can they balance their work responsibilities with the care their child needs?

Tama County Public Health is asking that parents plan ahead! If parents can plan now to make alternative child care arrangements it will make things easier for everyone. Arranging help from other parents with sick children, staggering work hours with spouses, or asking grandparents (if they are not chronically ill or immune compromised) might be some possibilities. It is important that children and adults are not going to movie theatres, shopping malls, athletic events, church etc. if they are symptomatic. Just stay home until symptoms subside and you are feeling better.

The symptoms of influenza may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people with Novel influenza (H1N1) may vomit or have diarrhea. Children and adults with these symptoms should not return to school or daycare until they have been fever free (with the use of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hrs.

If you present to your local doctor office with these symptoms you may be asked to wait in your car or be put in a separate waiting room before being seen. Your doctor may or may not test you for influenza; they may or may not treat you either. Viruses do not respond to antibiotics. The antiviral medication may not work for you if not started soon enough. Most viral illnesses runs if course in 3-7 days.

Certain people and certain age groups are more susceptible to the flu virus. Public Health is encouraging everyone to get a regular flu shot and if eligible to get the H1N1 flu vaccine. Please watch the local newspapers for dates and criteria for vaccinations.