

# HEALTH BEAT 2006

Cattaraugus County Health Department Newsletter  
"Public Health for Healthy Communities"

Fall/Winter Edition, 2006

Vol. 6 No. 2

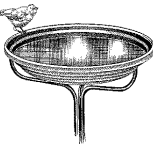


## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

**Q.** Is it too late to get a flu shot?

**A.** No, it is not too late. The best time to get a flu shot is October, November or December, to have protection before the flu season peaks - most often in February, but the season can peak any time from December through March. For more information regarding the flu, please turn to page 2.

**Q.** I am concerned about bird flu. Is it safe to feed backyard birds?



**A.** The severe bird flu called H5N1 avian influenza has not been found anywhere in the United States. Even if bird flu does come to the U.S., it's important to know that bird flu is hard for people to catch. If you enjoy feeding the birds, go ahead. Some things you can do to keep it safe and fun are: Clean and disinfect bird feeders regularly and wash your hands afterward. Do not touch any backyard birds with your bare hands. To learn more about bird flu, visit [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov).



**Q.** What is the difference between Type 1 diabetes and Type 2 diabetes?

**A.** Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas cannot produce insulin and most often occurs during childhood or adolescence. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body cannot use insulin properly. Type 2 diabetes most often affects adults over age 40 and is the most common form, affecting 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes. Obesity and lack of physical activity are contributing to a sharp increase in the number of children and young adults who develop type 2 diabetes. Please turn to page 4 of this newsletter for the complete article about the connection between diabetes and childhood obesity.



Did you know that drinking one extra 12 oz. can of regular soda per day can equal 15 pounds of weight gain in just **one** year?

**Q.** I am pregnant and trying to decide if I should breastfeed. Where can I get more information.

**A.** Choosing how you will feed your baby is the most important decisions you will make as new parents. Today, more and more mothers choose to breastfeed. By breastfeeding you give your baby security, nourishment and love, all at once. To learn more, visit [www.breastfeedingpartners.org](http://www.breastfeedingpartners.org). There you will find answers to questions about breastfeeding, how to get started, how to avoid problems, going back to work, and more. Breast milk is best for baby and can be an exciting and fulfilling part of motherhood. Visit the website for more information about the benefits of breastfeeding.

**Q.** Is secondhand smoke harmful?

**A.** Secondhand smoke is a drifting cloud of poisons. Even brief exposure can cause harm. Secondhand smoke can cause lung disease and heart disease in adults. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from pneumonia, ear infections and lung problems. Breathing secondhand smoke is as dangerous as smoking.



### In This Issue

Frequently Asked Questions.....	Page 1
Influenza.....	Page 2
Keep your Germs to Yourself.....	Page 3
Diabetes.....	Page 4

# Influenza

In any given winter, between 10 and 20 percent of all Americans will come down with influenza, commonly known as the flu. In a typical year, more than 100,000 Americans are admitted to hospitals because of the flu, and, on average, about 36,000 people die. But the good news is that influenza is often preventable.

Influenza is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It attacks the nose, throat and lungs. There is a vaccine that is available that can greatly reduce your chances of coming down with the flu.

People over 50 years of age, people of any age with chronic medical conditions, and very young children are more likely to get complications from the flu. The flu can make chronic health problems worse. For example, people with asthma may have asthma attacks while they have the flu. People with chronic heart or lung problems may experience worsening of their condition.

The best time to get the flu vaccine is in October, November or December, to have protection before the flu season peaks – most often in February, but the season can peak any time from December through March.

Two kinds of flu vaccine are available for the coming flu season. As in past, an “inactivated” influenza vaccine will be given as a shot, commonly known as the “flu shot.” Inactivated means that the vaccine uses a virus that has been killed, so there is no risk of getting the flu from the flu shot.

Recently introduced is a newer, “activated” influenza vaccine, which is given as a nasal spray. This vaccine uses a live, weakened virus. The nasal spray vaccine is approved for people from 5 to 49 years of age. It should not be used by pregnant women; people with heart, lung or kidney disease; people with a weakened immune system; or people on long-term aspirin treatment.

Because very young children are at an increased risk for being hospitalized with the flu, an annual flu shot is recommended for all children six-months to five years old, as well as caretakers and family members of children under two. People who work in health care settings should get a flu vaccine every year to protect not only themselves and their families. Even with mild symptoms, they might spread influenza to patients.

People with long-term health problems, pregnant women, children on long-term aspirin treatment, and residents of long term care facilities should get a flu shot. People who provide essential community services, or who live in dormitories or in crowded conditions should also consider getting the vaccine.

For more information on influenza clinics call the Cattaraugus County Health Department at 716-373-8050 or 1-800-251-2584.

---

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE FLU

Symptoms of the flu include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, muscle aches/pain, lack of energy and/or runny or stuffy nose.

Unlike a cold, with symptoms that come on gradually, flu usually hits all at once. Fever and severe body aches are common.

Stay at home if you are sick. It's important to avoid close contact with others if you are ill or have the flu. Stay home from work or school, and avoid other public places.



### For a Stronger Immune System:

- ✓ Get plenty of sleep
- ✓ Be physically active
- ✓ Manage your stress
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids and eat a well-balanced diet every day
- ✓ Be a “healthy habits” role model for your children
- ✓ Keep your distance from someone who has flu symptoms.

## KEEP YOUR GERMS TO YOURSELF!

Flu germs spread from person to person by way of coughing, sneezing or simply talking. That's because droplets from an infected person get into the air and are inhaled by people nearby. Anyone within three feet can easily be infected. Flu germs are also spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth. Flu germs can live for hours on surfaces like doorknobs, desks and tables. Start by learning the following healthy habits that can help prevent you from getting infected with flu or spreading flu germs at home, school or work:



### **Cover your cough**

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm, not your hand
- Put your used tissue in a wastebasket
- Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Stay home while ill, but if you must go out in public (for instance, to seek medical care), wear a surgical or procedure mask.

---

The germs that cause influenza are spread up to three feet when someone who has the flu coughs or sneezes. You can even spread flu germs when you speak. Wash your hands often to get rid of germs.

---

### **Keep your hands clean**

Your hands may look clean, but they have germs on them that could make you or someone else sick. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Wash your hands often with soap for 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer to protect yourself from germs and avoid spreading them to others.

Soap or alcohol-based hand rub kills the flu virus. When water is not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers may be used. It is especially important to clean your

#### hands:

- ξ After wiping or blowing your nose or coughing or sneezing
- ξ After using the bathroom
- ξ After being in contact with or being near someone who is ill
- ξ After touching handrails, doorknobs, telephones or other things handled by many people
- ξ Before and after eating or drinking
- ξ Before handling food, especially ready-to-eat foods like salads and sandwiches
- ξ After handling garbage or trash.

#### **How to wash your hands:**

- Wet your hands with warm running water
- Lather with soap and scrub between fingers, on the backs of your hands, and under nails
- Wash for at least 20 seconds. That's about as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice
- Dry your hands. Use paper towels or electric hand dryers
- Use a paper towel when you turn off the tap.

#### **How to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer:**

- 1 Dispense alcohol-based hand sanitizer into palm of hand.
- 2 Rub hands together working the gel between your fingers, under nails and back of hands
- 3 Continue rubbing hands until they are dry
- 4 Do not rinse hands or dry hands

## DIABETES AND CHILDHOOD OBESITY



Diabetes is at epidemic levels and the sixth leading cause of death in America. If poorly controlled, diabetes can lead to many problems, including blindness, kidney failure, amputation, heart disease and stroke.

Nearly 21 million Americans have diabetes, yet one-third of them are not aware they have the disease. Symptoms include: frequent urination; abnormal thirst; excessive appetite accompanied by weight loss; extreme fatigue; blurred vision; irritability; itchy skin; slow healing of cuts and bruises; frequent infections of skin/gums/vagina/bladder or tingling/numbness in legs, feet, hands.

There are two types of diabetes. Type 1 occurs when the pancreas cannot produce insulin and most often appears during childhood or adolescence. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body cannot use insulin properly. Type 2 diabetes most often affects adults over age 40 and is the most common form, affecting 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes.

Obesity and a lack of physical activity are contributing to a sharp increase in the number of children and young adults who develop type 2 diabetes. Almost unheard of in children 20 years ago, type 2 diabetes has skyrocketed among young Americans. About 800 children in New York State are diagnosed with diabetes each year.

Poor food choices marked by large portion sizes of fast and highly processed foods are a primary factor in weight gain. Eating foods high in calories and fat combined with little physical activity makes it difficult to burn excess calories and maintain a healthy weight. In children and adults alike, one of the greatest risk factors for type 2 diabetes is excess weight.

It is important to promote healthier eating and a more active lifestyle among our youth.

- ξ Family support and active parental participation in a child's weight reduction efforts are essential for success, and should include the following strategies:
- ξ Provide nutritious meals with controlled portion sizes
- ξ Plan meals as a family whenever possible
- ξ Provide healthy snacks
- ξ Avoid eating while watching TV or working at the computer
- ξ Avoid using food as a reward
- ξ Know what your child eats at school - pack your child's lunch whenever possible
- ξ Increase physical activity, especially walking. Arrange family outings that revolve around physical activity.

To prevent diabetes and reduce complications if your child has it:

- ξ Establish a healthy eating plan
- ξ Promote regular physical activity
- ξ Encourage your child to maintain a healthy weight
- ξ Maintain an appropriate blood sugar level by controlling diet and medication.



---

**Through positive, enduring lifestyle changes and working with health care professionals, overweight children can lose excess weight and maintain the health and vitality that all children should have.**

---

