

Influenza Information Sheet

Influenza virus causes many students to fall ill each year. Most students recover gradually over a week typically suffering with fever, muscle aches, headache, and respiratory symptoms over the course of the illness. Some may have other symptoms as well, such as sore throat or nausea.

For most students, influenza is not life threatening and most recover, with or without medications. However, there are some students - due to underlying medical issues such as asthma, or often for no known reason, who develop more serious illness when they become infected with influenza virus.

With this year's flu season, the addition of the Novel H1N1 influenza virus brings additional uncertainty. At this time, influenza due to Novel H1N1 ("Swine") flu has not produced a more severe illness than regular seasonal influenza. Individuals contracting influenza of the Novel H1N1 variety have not shown any increased morbidity as compared to those with regular seasonal influenza

In light of the small risk of more severe disease with any influenza virus, all adults who contract influenza should be aware of warning signs that need urgent medical attention:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worsening cough

Because the H1N1 virus is novel, or new, there is no immunity within the college population towards this virus. Consequently, the number of students affected by influenza at MTSU and around the world could be significantly increased this year. Even if the current severity of illness remains no worse than regular seasonal influenza, we still want to limit spread of the influenza virus on campus. Please follow these home care recommendations to help reduce spread of influenza virus if you become ill:

- Stay home from work and school until you have been without fever for 24 hours.
- Properly dispose of tissue and other disposable items used by the ill person in a trash receptacle.
Hands should be washed after every encounter with used tissues and similar waste.
- Everyone in the household/dorm room/apartment should wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- To prevent spread of germs, avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover mouth and nose with elbow area of arm to prevent spread of germs from cough or sneeze.
- Let roommates/household members know that medication for preventing influenza is available.
- Dishes should be washed in hot, soapy water or in the dishwasher.