Influenza (or “the flu”) is a viral respiratory infection of the nose, throat, and lungs. Up to 20 percent of the population gets influenza every year. These tips may help protect you and your family from the flu and its effects:

- Respiratory flu is highly contagious and comes on within one to four days of infection. Common symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache and body ache, and fatigue. Some people experience vomiting or diarrhea as well. People with chronic health conditions (such as asthma) may find that these conditions worsen when they have the flu.

- A person with the flu can be contagious up to a full day before she or he shows symptoms and for five to seven days after they appear. Health experts recommend that someone with the flu stay home until his or her fever has been gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

- Getting a flu shot is the best way to prevent or minimize the effects of the flu. Flu vaccines are typically available beginning in early fall.

- The flu is primarily spread by human contact. Good ways to protect yourself and others from possible infection include:
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, especially if you haven’t been able to wash your hands recently.
  - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away the tissue afterwards.
  - Wash your hands with soap and hot water often, especially after touching other people or items others have used. When hand washing is not an option, use hand sanitizer.
  - Frequently clean surfaces (tables, counters, doorknobs, sinks, etc.) with a bleach-based solution.
  - Limit your contact with others while sick. If possible, consider sleeping separately from a healthy spouse or partner. Using separate towels and not sharing eating utensils will also help to limit the spread of the illness.

Source: cdc.gov

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