

# SARAH • LAWRENCE • COLLEGE

## What You Should Know About: Influenza (Flu)

### What is Influenza (also called Flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent this illness is by getting a **flu vaccination** each fall. Sarah Lawrence College Health Services is currently offering the flu vaccine (shot) to students at no charge and to faculty for a fee of \$12.

### Symptoms of Flu

If you get infected by the flu virus, you will usually feel symptoms 1 to 4 days later. You can spread the flu to others before your symptoms start and for another 3 to 4 days after your symptoms appear. The symptoms start very quickly and may include

- Body aches
- Chills
- Dry cough
- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose

Typically, the fever begins to decline on the second or third day of the illness. The flu almost never causes symptoms in the stomach and intestines. The illness that some call "stomach flu" is not influenza.

### How Flu Spreads

Flu viruses spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from person to person, though sometimes people become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you can pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

Good Health Habits You Can Implement:

- **Avoid close contact.**  
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**  
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**  
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands.**  
Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**  
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

## Preventing the Flu: Get Vaccinated

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each fall. There are two types of vaccines:

- The "flu shot" – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. **The flu shot** is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine"). LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 5 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

If you have questions about whether you should get a flu vaccine, contact SLC Health Services at (914) 395-2350.