

**Subject:** PLEASE READ - Influenza Planning & Advisory Update

### **ATTENTION RWU COMMUNITY**

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Rhode Island Department of Health, there is widespread flu around the country and the state. Influenza is a respiratory illness with sudden symptoms that can include high fever, runny nose, body aches, headache and cough. We are currently in the peak of the flu season, with a gradual decline in incidence expected over the next 13 weeks.

Health Services has seen some influenza activity since November. We expect to see a significant increase in January and February. This news is no cause for alarm, but it does give us all the opportunity to plan ahead and practice effective prevention of this type of illness.

#### **Infection Control Recommendations:**

- **Get a flu shot, it is not too late!** Students, staff, and faculty are strongly encouraged to get a flu shot near in your home community **BEFORE** the start of the spring semester, as there is a limited supply of vaccine in our local area.
- Wash your hands frequently and use the alcohol based hand sanitizers that are located around campus.
- Avoid those who are ill, if possible.
- Clean high touch surfaces in your room and/or office with anti-bacterial cleaner (bleach wipes are very good).
- Cough into your sleeve or a tissue, not directly into your hands, and wash your hands immediately.
- Avoid touching your face both when you are ill and when healthy, this spreads germs!
- Avoid sharing food, utensils, cups, and water bottles.

#### **Health Care Recommendations:**

The treatment for influenza for otherwise healthy people is “supportive,” meaning the recommendation will be that you rest, drink plenty of fluids and take fever reducing medicine if you are experiencing flu like symptoms. Anti-viral medications (Tamiflu) are generally not recommended for healthy people with the flu. Students are advised to bring a thermometer, Tylenol or ibuprofen, and cold medicines back to school with them.

Most people who are infected with the flu will not require medical care. What this means is:

- If you are sick, stay home and in bed. Avoid crowded places like dining halls, classrooms, restaurants and the Recreation Center to prevent spreading your illness to others.
- Evaluation by a medical provider is not necessary unless you are experiencing warning signs
- Students must inform their professors of absence due to flu symptoms. You should not need a provider verification note to have absence excused. Health Services will not be providing medical notes when students miss class.
- Recruit a friend (your “Flu Buddy”) to help care for you and bring food to you from the dining hall – dining managers will make “sick tray” accommodations.

- Take fever reducers like acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve) if you have a fever. If your fever persists for more than 3 days in spite of fever reducers, please seek medical attention at Health Services.
- Drink plenty of fluids and get extra sleep.
- Contact Health Services at 401-254-3156 for medical advice if you are unsure of what to do after reading this information.

For students, faculty and staff who have chronic medical problems (ex. asthma, diabetes, obesity, heart, liver or kidney disease, immunodeficiency), it is important for you to seek medical attention within 48 hours of developing flu symptoms.

Warning Signs - seek medical attention if you are experiencing:

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

For more information, visit this site:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

For students needing help with making medical decisions, call Health Services at 401-256-3156. Faculty and Staff should consult with their primary health care provider or urgent care center.

Anne Mitchell

*Anne M. Mitchell, FNP*

Director of Health Services

Roger Williams University

One Old Ferry Road

Bristol, RI 02809

Tel: (401)254-3156

Fax: (401)254-3305

[amitchell@rwu.edu](mailto:amitchell@rwu.edu)