

Risk Alert



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Flu facts and prevention tips

On average, one out of five Americans will suffer from influenza each year. The flu season is considered to run from October through May. With many of the flu virus strains, people can be infectious before they show signs of any symptoms.

How influenza spreads

Influenza viruses spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. This is spread from person to person, by touching a contaminated surface and then touching the eyes, mouth or nose.

Flu prevention is the key. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months of age and older be immunized. The vaccine is usually effective but needs to be repeated annually to protect against new strains of flu viruses. Consult with your treating physician for the most current vaccination information. Another good practice is to wash your hands several times a day. If water is not available, use a hand sanitizer.



Changing worship practices

While most houses of worship simply recommend that parishioners stay home if they feel flu-like symptoms, some worship centers have already changed traditional worship practices by urging parishioners to refrain from shaking hands during greetings and from holding hands during prayer.

Other precautions can include having facemasks and hand sanitizer readily available for people who might want it or seating worshippers in alternating rows.

One practice that will need to be increased during the flu season is cleaning. Frequently clean pews, table tops, door handles, handrails, telephones, pens, pencils, toys and all other items that are shared or touched.

For additional flu safety information, see Church Mutual's Flu Prevention and Hand Washing Posters and *Risk Alert: Preparing for a Pandemic*. Visit www.churchmutual.com, click Safety Resources, then Risk Alerts.