Health Alert: Influenza 2018

To the campus community:

This year’s predominant strain of flu virus, H3N2, is more virulent than others from the past several years. Flu-associated hospitalizations and mortality are higher this year, and local hospitals are already operating at capacity due to widespread activity in the region.

As we approach the beginning of the spring semester, I encourage everyone to adopt behaviors that will contribute to a safe and healthy campus.

Students, faculty, and staff members who become ill with an influenza-like illness (i.e. cough, fever, sore throat, congestion, nausea, vomiting) should stay away from others for several days, until they are recovered.

Students are encouraged to not attend class, events, or meetings if they are ill with an influenza like illness. The Health Center will issue a Dean’s Excuse for students who are seen at Bailey or by an outside provider.

Student-athletes should notify their coach and trainer if they have flu symptoms; attending practice or using athletic equipment can compromise the entire team.

Students also are encouraged to not use College dining facilities when they are sick. As we encounter sporadic cases of influenza on campus, Dinning Services will offer “to go” meals as an option for delivery by friends. Find a “flu buddy” to help you out if you need assistance getting food or medication.

Although most individuals recover in three to seven days without treatment, antiviral medication may limit the duration of symptoms for serious cases and may limit spreading the virus to others. Prescription antiviral medication may also be an effective preventive strategy for students who have roommates with influenza. Tamiflu is now generic, which has resulted in a much lower out of pocket cost for the drug.

Because the virus can live on surfaces such as door knobs for up to eight hours, the College will continue to ensure a high standard of cleaning practices, using germicides that are effective in killing the influenza virus. Please help by keeping surfaces clean, especially in bathrooms and kitchens. There are hand sanitizers throughout campus for your use.

I encourage everyone to get vaccinated for the flu; it’s not too late! Some news reports have claimed that the effectiveness of the vaccine (VE) this year is minimal, however CDC data so far indicate that the vaccine may reduce the risk of influenza by 40 to 60 percent for all circulating strains. Flu vaccine is available at the Health Center for students and employees.

Finally, adhere to my mother’s advice: cover your cough, get some rest, wash your hands, and if you still get sick there’s always chicken soup.

Stay well,

Jeff Goldstein, Director of Health Service