**EMS Health and Safety Bulletin: Understanding the Flu!**

**What is Influenza?**

It is commonly referred to as “the flu”. It is a contagious respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat, and lungs.

**Who gets Influenza?**

Anyone can get it, butmore serious side effects are likely in young children, older persons and persons with chronic illnesses or who are immunocompromised.

**Signs and Symptoms**

* Sudden onset of fever
* Headache
* Chills
* Cough
* Sore throat
* Body aches
* In children: vomiting and diarrhea

**When is flu season?**

In the U.S. influenza occurs most often in late fall/winter months, but can happen at any time.



**Who should be vaccinated?**

All persons six months and older should be vaccinated. Particular effort should be made to immunize people at higher risk for influenza or complications, including:

* Pregnant and post-partum women, or those who will be pregnant during flu season
* Persons over 65 years of age, including residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
* People who have chronic lung and heart problems
* People who have other serious medical conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, etc.

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**How can Influenza be prevented?**

1. Get vaccinated
2. Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands, stay home from work, school or other activities when you are sick
3. Use antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them