

September 2010

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## How Do You Fight the Flu? Get Informed!

The flu is a highly contagious virus that infects millions of Canadians every year. The flu virus is spread by respiratory droplets from infected persons, through coughing, sneezing or talking. It is also spread through direct contact with objects contaminated by the flu virus.

Symptoms of the flu may appear quickly, including a sudden headache, sore throat and muscle aches. Most people recover from the flu in about a week, although some people may develop serious problems. On average, the flu and its complications send about 20,000 Canadians to the hospital each year, and about 4,000 Canadians die.<sup>1</sup>

Healthy children aged 6 to 23 months are at high risk. As child care providers, you could potentially spread the flu to children in your care.

The seasonal flu shot is one of the most effective ways to help protect yourself and others from getting the flu.

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. (n.d.). Retrieved June 2, 2010 from [www.phac-aspc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.ca)

Other simple steps include:

- Frequent hand washing
- Coughing and sneezing into your arm/sleeve
- Keeping shared surfaces clean
- Staying home when sick

### Flu Shot

Each year there is a new vaccine to protect against new strains of the flu – this is why you need a flu shot each year. The best time to get your flu shot is between October and December. Full protection against the flu takes about two weeks from the time you get the shot and lasts for six months.

Ask your doctor or visit a York Region community clinic to get the flu shot. Visit [www.york.ca/flu](http://www.york.ca/flu) for clinic dates, times and locations.



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## Fifth Disease and Pregnancy

Fifth disease is a respiratory infection seen most often in children, but can develop in adults. In children, they may develop a:

- Fever and headache
- Rosy to bright red “slapped-cheek” rash in one to four days
- Rash that becomes lacy and net-like in appearance
- Rash that spreads to the trunk and limbs after one week

Approximately 20% of adults who develop Fifth disease will not have any symptoms.<sup>1</sup> The remaining 80% of infected adults may experience joint pain or swelling that may last several weeks to months. Once someone has been infected with the virus and recovered, they develop lifelong protection against any further Fifth disease infections.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Division of Viral Diseases. Retrieved June 30, 2010 from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Mothers of young children and child care providers are at high risk of infection because they are exposed more often to the illness in children. The virus that causes Fifth disease usually spreads by contact with the respiratory secretions of an infected person, or from hand to mouth contact.

A pregnant woman who has been exposed to Fifth disease should discuss her risk with her physician. For most pregnant women, exposure to Fifth disease does not usually affect the baby.

Keeping people with symptoms of Fifth disease away from the centre does not likely prevent the spread of this illness — these individuals were contagious before the symptoms appeared, and may have already spread the virus. As with most viruses, frequent handwashing is your best protection!

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## Minimize the Spread of Germs in Child Care Settings

Hand hygiene is the term used for cleaning your hands, either by using soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR).

- Washing your hands with liquid soap and warm running water is the preferred method
- Wash your hands:
  - after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
  - after going to the bathroom
  - before and after visiting someone who is sick
  - after touching animals
  - before eating, drinking and handling food
  - after handling garbage
  - if your hands look or feel dirty

- Follow the correct handwashing procedure:
  1. Wet hands
  2. Soap
  3. Lather (min. 15 seconds)
  4. Rinse
  5. Towel dry
  6. Turn taps off with towel
- When you can't wash your hands with soap and water, ABHR can be used. Children must be supervised at all times while using ABHR

### Cover Your Cough

- Encourage children to cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve or by using a tissue to cover their cough or sneeze.



For more information call **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933)