

## HEALTHLINE

# Flu Season Is Here

by Sandra Sagisi



**I**landers with heart and lung ailments and people with a low immune system, take precautions because flu season is early this year. You know the symptoms! Your head feels stuffy. You have a runny nose and your muscle aches. Cases of Influenza began showing up at a nursing and military facility.

The State Health Department is urging people who are at risk to get immunized. Elderly individuals and people with chronically ill diseases fall under the high risk category. You can get the flu when you are near an infected person or by staying away

from big crowds. But just how realistic is that?

A healthcare group, Queen's Care, has already immunized more than 2,000 employees this fall. Nurses go directly to the work place giving people a shot in the arm with the flu vaccine. The company has launched a program called "The Flu Shot Promotion." More and more companies are apparently investing in this type of project because they found that by immunizing their employees early, it cuts down on the sick leave money. Vice president of Queen's Care says, "The latest immunization pro-

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gram is convenient. Employees are protected during the flu season and as a result, their attendance improves so production for the company is maintained."

KGMB9 took advantage of the program. The shots were free of charge to the staffers because our company foot the bill. This flu shot promotion is just one solution that health organizations have come up with to prevent workers from coming down with the illness,

and saving the company money.

The newest strain this year is called the Wuhan Flu which originated from China. Dr. Paul Effler, a State Epidemiologist from the Department of Health says there are other simple things you can do to protect yourself or to prevent the flu. Good diet and exercise help. Effler says, "Obviously you want to take general measures such as staying healthy. Most of us lead active lives where most of us really can't isolate ourselves from the community during the flu season so you have to take care of your body." Washing your hands each time you go to the bathroom or before meals can prevent many types of illnesses. Dr. Effler adds, "I certainly recommend people wash their hands although it would not necessarily be sufficient to keep you from getting influenza." But doctors say, every precautionary measure helps.

So far there are 34 reported cases of influenza in Hawaii. The Health Department says that number is just the tip of the iceberg. Many cases aren't diagnosed properly so there are more flu cases out there that aren't reported. The more reason the Department suggests you should get a shot in the arm soon.

One of the most obvious symptoms of the flu is fever. It's the body's way of responding to infection. You usually feel like you just ran a



marathon when you have the flu. Some useful tips if you do come down with the illness: Drink lots of liquids. Get plenty of rest. If you're running a fever, doctors say stay in bed until your body gets back to normal temperature. Don't take any chances, call your doctor if the fever persists for more than three days. But the Health Department says the best protection is the flu vaccine itself. Just a reminder, people actually die from flu-related complications. Doctors say take action now so that you won't develop severe complications.

Contact your healthcare provider to find out if you can get vaccinated. After you get the shot, you may feel like you have flu-like symptoms. These are common side effects of the vaccine. If you're allergic to egg whites, don't get vaccinated. The shot could give you complications.

Many holistic doctors oppose vaccination. See your physician if you are a candidate for the flu vaccine.

Sandra Sagisi is a broadcast journalist for KGMB TV 9 News. She can be seen Monday through Friday with her Healthline report at 5 p.m. Sagisi's health and other reports have earned her a couple of Emmy nominations. She has also won several journalism and community service awards.