

## Influenza (“The Flu”)

- 1.) **Definition:** Influenza is a viral illness that affects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, trachea or windpipe, and lungs). (It is not an intestinal illness, as in the “GI Flu” or stomach flu,” as many people mistakenly think). Influenza usually hits our area as early as December and may last until about March. The main symptoms are fever, headache, muscle aches, runny nose, scratchy or sore throat, and a nagging, long- lasting cough. The cough is usually dry, not rattly, and may sound hoarse or croupy. While most of the symptoms last about five days, the cough can easily last two weeks. Since there are so many types of influenza virus, with different ones appearing each year, it is possible to get the flu every year. Although the vaccine is not perfect, it usually helps. It is recommended that all children get the flu vaccine yearly (with some rare exceptions). The vaccine should especially be given to children with asthma, cystic fibrosis, and other lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illness.
- 2.) **Treatment:**
  - a.) Fever or discomfort: Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Motrin. See the section of **FEVER** for the proper dose.
  - b.) Cough-Remember that the cough with influenza is a long one and often lasts for two weeks. See the section on **COUGH** for more information.
- 3.) **Call our office during regular hours if:**
  - a.)The cough has lasted more than 2 weeks
  - b.) The cough has lasted more than a week and sounds rattly or wheezy or your child has a new fever.
  - c.) You think your child needs the influenza vaccine.
  - d.) The illness seems to be resolving and then the fever returns.