

Dear Members of the Skidmore Community,

Flu activity is widespread in most of the United States and cases are expected to increase over the next several weeks-months. Peak season is usually in February.

Skidmore Health Services staff is urging students, faculty, and staff to take preventive measures to protect their health.

Influenza like illness is defined as:

Fever of 100°F (37.8°C) or higher and a cough and/or sore throat in the absence of a known cause other than influenza.

Because flu can spread by contact with people who are ill, we recommend that community members consider these precautions:

- **Get a flu shot.** It is not too late to get a flu shot. There are still weeks of flu season to come. Flu shots are available at most local pharmacies and may be covered by your health insurance; please call in advance for availability. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctor's visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. The more people who get vaccinated, the more people will be protected from flu, including older people, very young children, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term health conditions who are more vulnerable to serious flu complication. Some media reports have speculated that this year's flu shot will only be 10% effective for Americans, based on results seen in Australia during its flu season. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said that it expects this year's effectiveness rate to be closer to last year's number, between 32% and 39%.
- **Wash hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer frequently, especially after touching common surfaces such as door handles. Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing with either a disposable tissue or a sleeve, and avoid touching your face. Avoid contact with people who are sick. Get plenty of rest to keep the immune system working at its best.
- **Monitor your health.** Flu symptoms include fever of 100°F or higher with cough and/or sore throat, and sometimes runny nose, body aches, headache, vomiting or diarrhea.

What to do if sick with the flu:

- **Wear a face mask** to prevent spreading your germs whenever you are in a public space, if possible.
- **Maintain isolation** until you do not have a fever for 24 hours without using fever reducing medications.
- **If you have asthma or a chronic medical condition** and are experiencing symptoms, call your primary care provider for medical guidance.
- **Rest:** Bed rest is critical if you're diagnosed with the flu. Not only will you avoid transmitting a highly contagious illness to others, you'll help your immune system better fight off the infection.
- **Hydrate:** Adequate fluid intake is one of the most important aspects of fighting influenza. Choose water, juice, Gatorade, and warm soups to prevent dehydration. Most individuals will need at least 3-5 liters (1 liter = approximately 32 ounces) per day of non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic fluid when ill.
- **Medicate:** Take medications according to package instructions. If you have questions about dosing or medication interactions, call your local pharmacy or your primary care provider.
- **Fever and body aches:** Acetaminophen (i.e. Tylenol), Ibuprofen (i.e. Motrin, Advil) or Naproxen Sodium (i.e., Aleve). Do not take ibuprofen and naproxen sodium together because they are similar types of medication. Read all label instructions prior to taking.
- **Congestion:** Decongestants (Sudafed and Phenylephrine) and sinus rinse as directed.
- **Sore Throat:** Drinking lots of fluids, gargling with salt water (made by combining a cup of warm water and a teaspoon of salt), sucking on throat lozenges and hard candy can often be helpful for easing the pain of a sore throat.

- **Cough:** Cough associated with colds may be caused by nasal obstruction or postnasal drip. Medications with dextromethorphan may help somewhat, but treating nasal congestion may yield greater benefit. You can also try to avoid sleeping completely flat. Sleeping propped up on two or three pillows may do a great deal to help make breathing easier.

Keep your germs to yourself. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze!

Call your primary care provider if:

- Your fever or symptoms are severe despite taking self-care medications
- You cannot self-hydrate due to nausea or vomiting
- You have medical questions.

Additional information regarding this season's flu outbreak may be found at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

Thank you,
Health Services Staff