

For Immediate release

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What: Flu cases in Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties have increased significantly in February and March. More than 500 cases have been reported in March already!

Background: The flu is a contagious respiratory illness. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. Every year in the United States, on average 36,000 people die from flu annually and 200,000 are hospitalized. In our tri-county area, more than 4,000 cases of flu were reported in 2006

Symptoms of the flu:

- * Fever (usually high),
- * Dry cough, sore throat
- * Muscle aches
- * Headache, extreme tiredness
- * Runny or stuffy nose
- * Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea

How Flu Spreads:

The flu spreads most by coughing and sneezing (person to person). Adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** getting symptoms and up to 7 days **after** getting sick. **That means that you can give someone the flu before you know you're sick as well as while you are sick.**

If you feel you already have the flu you should:

- ✓ Rest
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids
- ✓ Avoid using alcohol and tobacco
- ✓ Take medication to relieve symptoms of flu – antibiotics do **NOT** work
- ✓ If at all possible – stay at home – do not go to work
- ✓ Cover your mouth when coughing – **flu is spread person-to-person**
- ✓ Wash hands frequently

Is it really the flu? You decide. Make sure you know before you go out.

| Symptoms | Cold | Flu |
|------------------|---------------|--|
| Fever | Rare | Yes- often high – 102 to 105F lasts 3-4 days |
| Headache | Rare | Yes |
| Aches and Pains | slight | Yes – often severe |
| Weakness | Mild | Yes – can last up to 2-3 weeks |
| Stuffy Nose | Common | Not usually |
| Sneezing | Common | Sometimes |
| Sore Throat | Common | Sometimes |
| Chest discomfort | Common – mild | Common – can become severe |

For More information about the Flu or other health issues, visit us on the web at:

www.bhsj.org