

# Epi Watch

## Disease of the Month: Influenza

### What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza, commonly called "the flu," is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). Unlike many other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, the flu causes severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people.

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

Influenza is a respiratory illness. Symptoms of flu include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Children can have additional gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and

diarrhea, but these symptoms are uncommon in adults. Although the term "stomach flu" is sometimes used to describe vomiting, nausea, or diarrhea, these illnesses are caused by certain other viruses, bacteria, or possibly parasites, and are rarely related to influenza.

### How does the flu spread?

The main way that influenza viruses are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. (This is called "droplet spread.") This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of



an infected person are propelled (generally up to 3 feet) through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Though much less frequent, the viruses also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.

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### Special Points of Interest

The Tulsa Health Department offers free Influenza (Flu) vaccines during the Flu season.

Visit our website at: [www.tulsa-health.org](http://www.tulsa-health.org) or call 582-9355 for clinic hours and locations.

## TIPS: Preventing The Spread of Respiratory Illnesses

These steps may help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:

- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze—throw the tissue away after you use it or cough/sneeze into your elbow.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, and social gatherings.** In this way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way.

## REPORTED CASES OF SELECTED DISEASES

### CURRENT NEWS

On 27 December 2006, the World Health Organization reported three new human cases of Avian influenza virus A (H5N1). All three cases belong to one extended family in Cairo, Egypt. The cases were a 30 year-old female, a 15 year-old female and a 26 year-old male. All three cases died. They reportedly had contact with sick poultry (ducks). There have been 114 reported human cases of avian influenza with 79 deaths in 2006.

Avian influenza is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These influenza viruses occur naturally among birds. Influenza A viruses are constantly changing, and they might adapt over time to infect and spread among humans. Symptoms of avian influenza in humans have ranged from typical human influenza-like symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases (such as acute respiratory distress), and other severe and life-threatening complications.

The Tulsa Health Department collects Emergency Room chief complaint data to monitor the emergence of illnesses, such as influenza, in our community. For additional information on THD's county-wide surveillance system please [click here](#)

Disease	Tulsa County		Oklahoma	
	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2006	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2005	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2006	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2005
<i>Campylobacter</i>	42	51	337	541
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	6	3	36	35
<i>Giardia</i>	23	33	125	195
Hepatitis A	4	1	9	6
Hepatitis B	55	12	108	58
Hepatitis C	360	n/a	985	n/a
Rabies (Animal)	2	1	67	79
Salmonella	88	50	502	440
Shigella	19	16	135	932

n/a = due to changes in reporting requirements these numbers are still being calculated

## Surveillance Report

