CAREGIVER'S CORNER

Actions to Prevent the Flu

By Raquel Oldaker, Director of Clinic and home Care Services, LIFE Lawrence County

Flu is a serious, contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. As a caregiver, not only should you take steps to prevent your loved one from contacting the disease, but you should protect yourself as well.

Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without the fever.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and foremost important step in protecting against flu viruses. While there are many different flu viruses, the vaccine protects against the three viruses that research suggests will be most common. Everyone age six months of age and older should get the vaccine at the beginning of flu season.

People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people age 65 and older.

Vaccination is also important for heath care workers and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading the flu to the high risk population.

These preventive actions can stop the spread of flu germs:

♦ Avoid contact with sick people.

♦ If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

♦ While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

♦ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

♦ Wash your hands often with soap and water.

♦ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

♦ Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs.

Lutheran SeniorLife