**Step 1** Get your flu shot

- Everyone age 6 months and older is recommended to get a flu shot each year by VA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Getting a flu shot is the best way to slow the spread of flu from person to person.
- Get a flu shot every year as flu viruses can change from year to year.
- Anyone can get flu, but some people are at high risk for complications from flu:
  - people age 65 and older
  - people with health problems like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, and other chronic illnesses or conditions
  - pregnant women or people caring for an infant or a family member with health problems.

**Step 2** Know how flu is spread

- When a person with flu sneezes, coughs, talks, or laughs, flu virus can spread into the air as droplets.
- The droplets can spread to people and surfaces up to 6 feet away.
- Flu virus can spread to your hands if you touch anything that has the virus on it. If you then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth, you might get flu.
- A person can spread flu to others about 1 day before they feel sick and up to 5 days after getting sick.

**Step 3** Know the symptoms of flu

- Fever (100°F or higher)
- Body and muscle aches
- Headache
- Feeling tired or weak (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Nausea and vomiting
- Stomach symptoms (mostly in children)

Each year in the U.S., thousands die and many more are hospitalized because of flu.
Step 4
Clean your hands AND surfaces around you
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Use paper towels to dry hands or don’t share cloth towels.
- Clean your hands:
  - before eating or preparing food
  - before and after caring for someone who is sick
  - after coughing or sneezing
  - after using the bathroom
- Flu virus can live on surfaces for up to 48 hours.
- Clean surfaces that are touched often such as: phones, faucets, light switches, countertops, door and cabinet handles, keyboard and mouse, and TV remotes.

Step 5
Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Use clean tissues and discard after each use.
- Coughing or sneezing into your sleeve is OK when you don’t have a tissue.
- Always clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.

Step 6
Stay home when sick
- Because flu spreads easily from person to person, stay home when you are sick.
- Studies show you are most contagious and likely to spread flu virus to others for at least 5 days after your first symptoms start AND at least 48 hours after your last fever.

“STEP UP” TO PREVENT FLU: You can reduce the spread of flu this year. As fall and winter approach, we all face the health challenges of flu season.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?
www.publichealth.va.gov/flu
www.cdc.gov/flu
www.flu.gov

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Public Health (10P3)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
publichealth@va.gov

March 2014 | FLU FS-2

This material is NOT copyrighted and may be reproduced
www.publichealth.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn