

Flu Home Care Instructions

What is influenza (flu) and what is a pandemic flu?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease. It is caused by a virus that attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. It can be prevented by immunization.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), pandemic flu is a new influenza virus that would affect people around the world.

Three criteria determine a pandemic flu:

- A new influenza subtype emerges to which humans have no immunity.
- Humans are infected and become very sick (or die).
- It is contagious and spreads from person-to-person efficiently.

What are the symptoms of flu?

Symptoms come quickly and can include:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fever
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches

These symptoms can be severe. They may require you to stay in bed for several days.

How is the flu different from a cold?

A cold generally stays up in the head while the flu brings body aches, fever and extreme fatigue. A child with a cold will usually keep up his or her normal activities. A child with the flu will often feel too sick to play.

How soon will you get sick if you are exposed to the flu?

The time from when a person is exposed to flu virus to when symptoms begin is about one to four days with an average of about two days.

You should call your doctor if:

- Your fever continues to rise despite taking medicine.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have severe neck pain or stiffness.
- You have trouble thinking clearly.

How Can I Protect Myself & Others?

- Wash your hands often – with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer.
- Stay home from social events, school or work if you have a respiratory infection.
- Avoid exposure to others who are sick with a flu-like illness.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue whenever you cough or sneeze. Then throw the tissue away.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- If you have an infant, don't expose him or her unnecessarily to large crowds when influenza is in your community. Avoid putting the baby in close contact (holding, kissing) with family members who may have influenza (fever, muscle aches, runny nose, cough) or other respiratory infections.
- Do not share anything that goes into the mouth (drinking cups and straws).
- Clean commonly touched surfaces (door knobs, refrigerator handle, phone, water faucets) often if someone in the house has a cold or flu.
- Do not smoke around children

What If You Think You or Your Child Has the Flu?

- **Stay home if you are ill and encourage others to do so as well.**
- Rest and drink lots of fluids. This will help your body recover from the infection.
- Take medication such as acetaminophen to relieve the symptoms (but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu like symptoms – particularly fever – without talking to your doctor).
- Since flu is caused by a virus and not by bacteria, antibiotics will not help a person recover from the flu. Anti-viral medicine is an option for some but not all.
- Call your doctor or clinic about what to do if you are concerned.
- Follow your child's doctor's instructions about keeping his or her fever under control. Children often need help with this.
- Take your child to the doctor or the emergency room if he or she:
 - Is breathing quickly or with difficulty
 - Has bluish skin color
 - Is not drinking enough and becomes dehydrated
 - Is not waking up or interacting with others
 - Is so irritable that he or she doesn't want to be held
 - Gets better only to become sick again, with fever and a more severe cough
 - If he/she does not seem "right" and you are concerned

What about Anti-Viral Medications?

Anti-viral medications can benefit some people in some situations, but there are risks in taking them. Some people may have serious side effects.

Anti-virals are more often used to help contain influenza outbreaks in settings such as nursing homes or to protect a high-risk person who is in direct contact with someone who has influenza.

You must take anti-virals within two days of being exposed to influenza for them to prevent the disease. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions.

For information on seasonal, pandemic and swine flu visit www.noflu.org.

For more information visit www.NoFlu.org