

Influenza Fact Sheet

What is Influenza?

- Influenza is a contagious viral infection that affects mainly the nose, throat, chest and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times it can lead to death.
- In the very young, the elderly, and those with serious medical conditions, influenza can lead to severe complications such as pneumonia.
- The best way to prevent the influenza virus is to get the flu vaccine every year.

Most Common Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle ache
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Tiredness

Warning Signs of Influenza that would require urgent medical attention

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish Skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up
- Fever with a rash

Incubation Period

- A person with any of the Influenza viruses can infect others as early as 24 hours before experiencing any symptoms or as late as 10 days after being sick.

What to do if you get the flu

- Stay home from school or work
- Get plenty of rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Avoid close contact with friends and family members
- Make use of over-the-counter medications
- Consult your doctor

How to prevent/reduce the spread of influenza at home or in the community?

- Get vaccinated! The influenza vaccine is the single most important measure to prevent the infection of influenza.
- Stay home when ill. Anyone experiencing influenza-like symptoms should stay at home and drink plenty of fluids. This is extremely important among daycare and school age children, personnel working in school settings, and the elderly population.

- Wash hands often. Wash hands with soap and warm water for about 15-20 seconds. Use clean or disposable towels to dry. Young children should be assisted to ensure they wash their hands properly.
- Cover mouth while coughing and sneezing. Using the upper arm or a tissue to cover the mouth while coughing and/or sneezing prevents the spread of influenza viruses. Used tissues should be thrown away immediately and hands should be washed; if unable to wash hands then hand sanitizer should be used.
- Consult a health care provider. People that have influenza, especially those that are elderly or have other medical conditions, may want to contact their physicians for further evaluation.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

- Everyone should the flu vaccine; it reduces the chances of getting the flu or passing it to others.
- People in the following high-risk groups should not avoid the vaccine as they may experience serious flu-related complications.
 - Children aged 6 months to 19th years
 - Pregnant women
 - People 50 years of age and older
 - People with chronic medical conditions
 - People who live in nursing home or other long term care facilities
 - People that live with or care for persons at high risk
 - Health care workers