



INFLUENZA CARE

What is INFLUENZA (the flu)?

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. There are two main types of influenza viruses: type A and type B. Each type has many different subtypes or strains. Type A influenza causes moderate to severe illness. One example of a Type A influenza strain is H1N1 influenza. Type B influenza causes milder disease and primarily affects children. Influenza occurs throughout the year, but seasonally peaks from December to March.

What are flu symptoms?

Flu symptoms are fever, headache, muscle aches, extreme fatigue, sore throat, runny nose, stuffy nose, and a cough. At times, intestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain are present, but should not be confused with the “stomach flu.”

Symptoms of H1N1 flu are identical to regular flu symptoms, but some people with H1N1 flu report diarrhea and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may worsen previously existing medical conditions or cause severe illness such as pneumonia, respiratory failure and death.

What does a person do if they have the flu?

Basic treatment includes bed rest, fluids and over-the-counter medications to relieve symptoms of a runny or stuffy nose, cough, sore throat, fever and discomfort. Drink plenty of non-caffeinated, clear liquids like chicken noodle soup and decaffeinated hot tea.

Do not use aspirin for infants, children or teenagers because of the associated risk for contracting Reye Syndrome. Antiviral medications may reduce the severity and shorten the duration of influenza type A in healthy adults when administered within 48 hours of illness onset. These drugs may have side effects and must be ordered by a physician.

Most ill people recover after a few days of rest and do not necessarily have to go to the doctor's office unless flu symptoms worsen (for example, a prolonged high fever or severe chest congestion). Call the doctor to receive care instructions and to ask if a visit is necessary. The doctor could prescribe antiviral prescription medicines if symptoms occurred within the past two days.

People with the flu should stay home from work, school and other gatherings to prevent sickening others. Do not return to work or school until at least 24 hours after being free of fever (100° F [37.8° C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

When should the sick seek urgent medical care?

Children need urgent emergency medical care when they have trouble breathing, or breathe faster; when their skin turns a bluish color; and when they do not drink enough liquids. Other warning signs are not waking up or interacting; not wanting to be held; flu-like symptoms that improve but return with a fever and worse cough; and a fever with a rash.

Adults need urgent emergency medical care when they have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, and when they have pain or pressure in their chest or abdomen. Other warning signs are sudden dizziness, confusion, and severe or persistent vomiting.

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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Frequently Asked Questions

How is influenza spread?

Influenza, including H1N1 influenza, is spread from person-to-person by direct contact with airborne particles or large droplets from the respiratory tract of the infected person when coughing, sneezing, or talking. Transmission can also occur by handling articles recently contaminated by secretions from the nose and throat of the infected person. Hand washing and avoiding or limiting contact with an infected person may reduce the risk of infection.

How long can an ill person spread influenza?

Persons are most contagious during the 24 hours before symptoms appear and may be contagious for up to 7 days.

How is H1N1 influenza prevented?

Take these steps to protect yourself from contracting H1N1 influenza and spreading it to others:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners (containing at least 60% alcohol) are effective when soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty.
- Avoid close contact with sick people. Ill persons should wear a facemask, if possible, when within 6 feet of others at home. Designate a single household member as the caregiver to minimize interactions with persons who are not ill.
- Stay home from work or school if you are, and limit contact with others. People infected with H1N1 influenza or ill with any influenza-like illness should remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. This recommendation does not apply to health care settings where the exclusion period is 7 days from symptom onset, or until symptoms are resolved.
- If people with flu-like illness must go into the community, they should wear a facemask to reduce the risk of spreading the virus when coughing, sneezing, talking or breathing. If a facemask is unavailable, use a handkerchief or tissues to cover any coughing. Dispose the tissues properly after use.

References and Sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: www.pandemicflu.gov
- Delaware Division of Public Health: www.flu.delaware.gov
- Web MD: www.webmd.com

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