

INFLUENZA

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Incubation

Usually one to five days

Signs and Symptoms

Rapid onset of fever, headache, muscle aches, sore throat and dry cough

Communicability

Until three to five days after onset of symptoms in adults, and for up to seven days after onset of symptoms in children

Method of Transmission

By direct contact with droplets of respiratory secretions (influenza virus persists for hours in dried mucus), or through airborne spread in crowded, enclosed spaces. Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughing and sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Isolation/Exclusion From School

Students should be excluded from school until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved. Students should also be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

Prevention

The **single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated** each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

There also are **flu antiviral drugs** that can be used to treat and prevent the flu.

Additional Information

Vaccine is recommended for children and adults with certain chronic diseases and for persons who provide direct care to others. Groups of persons at highest risk of influenza-related complications are persons 50 years of age or older; residents of nursing homes; adults and children with chronic pulmonary or cardiovascular disorders and/or chronic metabolic disease, renal dysfunction, blood disorders or immunosuppression.

Otherwise healthy persons 6 months of age and older who wish to reduce their likelihood of becoming ill with influenza should also consider vaccination.

Good basic hygiene, especially covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing is important to reduce the spread of influenza.