

Facts on Influenza

What is Influenza?

- Influenza or the Flu is a respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus.
- Most people are sick for 2 to 7 days, but the cough may last for weeks.
- Some people can get much sicker with complications of pneumonia, hospitalization, and even death.
- People who have lung or heart problems are at the greatest risk for complications.

Signs and Symptoms of Influenza

- **Sudden** onset of fever.
- New/worse cough.
- Shortness of breath.

Additional symptoms may include:

- Sore throat.
- Muscle pain.
- Joint pain.
- Headache.
- Fatigue.
- **In children under 5 years, gastrointestinal symptoms may also be present.**
- **If you are pregnant and ill with the flu, call you doctor.**

How is it spread?

- It spreads from infected persons to the nose and throat of others through coughing and sneezing.
- It also spreads by direct contact with surfaces and objects, which are contaminated with the influenza virus.
- **Good handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of influenza.**
- **Stay 1 metre (3 feet) away from other people**

What can I do to keep from getting sick?

- **Wash your hands often.**
- **Stay at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from sick people.**
- If you can see dirt on your hands it is best to wash with soap and warm water, otherwise you can use a hand sanitizer.
- Eat well, get plenty of sleep, and exercise regularly.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. These habits spread germs.
- Don't go to a doctor's office without calling ahead and telling them your symptoms and travel history.
- Reasonable cleaning of those surfaces which are frequently touched, such as door knobs, faucets, and bathroom counter surface

If you are sick:

- **Stay home.**
- **Keep your distance 1 metre (3 feet) away from others.**
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or the forearm.
- Throw tissues in the garbage immediately after use.

References:

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British Columbia Ministry of Health. *Staying healthy during an influenza pandemic* (2005, November). Retrieved March 29, 2006, from, <http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile94b.stm>