



Tips to Tackle Influenza Season

Influenza

What is it?

Influenza (also called “flu” or “seasonal influenza”) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza A, B and C viruses. Influenza A and B viruses cause seasonal epidemics of the disease almost every winter in the Northern hemisphere. Influenza C infections cause mild respiratory illness and are not thought to cause epidemics. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has developed an informational guideline for addressing influenza. This information can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu/.

Symptoms

Common signs and symptoms of influenza include:

- High fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Stuffy/runny nose
- Body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Chills
- Diarrhea and vomiting can occur with the flu

* Influenza can lead to secondary illnesses, such as ear and sinus infections and possibly pneumonia.

infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1–4 days before symptoms develop

Treatment

Antiviral medications can be used to treat the flu. Antiviral medications are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping the flu viruses from reproducing in the body. Influenza infections cannot be treated with antibiotics. This is because antibiotics work to fight bacteria and not viruses.

Already Sick?

People who are already sick should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever subsides. Anytime you or others cough or sneeze, cover your mouth with a tissue or upper part of your shirt sleeve, completely covering your mouth and nose. Dispose of the tissue once used. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after sneezing or coughing.



How it Spreads Among People

People already infected with influenza can transmit the disease to others starting a day before the infected person shows symptoms and continuing for approximately 7 days after they show symptoms. Influenza viruses are spread through droplets that carry the virus as a result of a cough or sneeze. The virus can live on surfaces for up to several days. A single sneeze can release 40,000 droplets, which can travel through the air and be inhaled or swallowed by others. Droplets can also settle on surfaces, where people can pick the virus up on their hands and by touching their mouth, nose or eyes, become infected.

Prevention

Hand hygiene & surface disinfection are key components to help prevent the flu from spreading

Clean Hands

Additional precautions include washing your hands frequently and any time after sneezing or coughing. If handwashing is not available, use an alcohol hand sanitizer.

Wash with soap and water. There is no substitute for handwashing. Traditional handwashing is very effective at physically removing dirt and germs.

Sanitize with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to rapidly clean hands. Alcohol can kill the germs on hands, but does not remove soil. If your hands are soiled, you should wash your hands.

Get Vaccinated

The best way to protect yourself from influenza is to get vaccinated each year. Anyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated annually. By getting the influenza vaccine, you can protect yourself against influenza viruses that are the same or related to the viruses in the vaccine.

Clean & Disinfect Surfaces

Commonly touched surfaces (door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, keyboards, phone, etc) should be disinfected regularly or when visibly soiled using an EPA or Health Canada registered disinfectant.

Cleaning Best Practices

- Increase cleaning frequency during the influenza season. This may mean changing the traditional cleaning schedule to an “every 4 hour” cleaning schedule of all common areas.
- Be mindful to disinfect all high touch surfaces, particularly in public areas using a registered disinfectant effective against influenza
- Make wipes available in common areas
- Encourage hand hygiene
- Clean from high to low
- Clean from dirtiest to cleanest
- Clean from dry to wet
- Maintain a constant flow such as working in a clockwise direction around the room



