

FACT SHEET

Keeping our clients safe

Important information about:

INFLUENZA

What is Influenza?

Influenza (or the “flu”) is a serious respiratory illness that is caused by a virus.

What is the difference between Influenza A, B and C?

There are three strains of the Influenza virus. Influenza A is generally considered more severe than the B and C strains, which usually cause milder symptoms.

How do people get Influenza? You can get Influenza if someone who has it coughs or sneezes on you. Touching hands, surfaces or objects that someone with Influenza has touched and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth can all lead to getting Influenza.

Who is at risk? Everyone is at risk of getting Influenza. Although most people will not get seriously ill, some people may develop Influenza-related complications such as lung infections (pneumonia), ear infections, dehydration (loss of body fluids) and, in rare cases, death. People most at risk include: children less than five years of age; people 65 years of age and older; people with chronic health conditions; healthy pregnant women; and Aboriginal peoples.

What are the symptoms? Influenza causes fever, chills, muscle aches, headaches, runny nose, sore throat, cough, weakness and tiredness. Symptoms usually last two to seven days. Cough and weakness may last for up to six weeks. Children may have stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

Usually one to four days; the average is two days.

How long can a person spread Influenza?

A person can spread the virus to others shortly before symptoms appear and during their illness.

How can Influenza be treated?

Most people do not need medical treatment and can stay home until they feel better. Those who are very sick or in a risk group may take Influenza antiviral drugs, which are prescription drugs that are used to prevent or reduce the severity of Influenza symptoms. Influenza antiviral drugs work best when started within two days of getting sick.

Did you know? The use of antibiotics is not appropriate in most cases because antibiotics are not effective against viruses.

How can we limit the spread of Influenza?

- talk to your health care provider about getting the Influenza vaccine (the flu shot) each fall
- wash and sanitize your hands often
- cough and sneeze into your elbow or tissue, not into your hands
- stay home when you are sick
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are sick with Influenza

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