

COLD OR INFLUENZA

How to tell the difference

| Symptoms | Cold | Influenza |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Fever | Rare | Characteristic, high (102–104F); lasts 3–4 days |
| Headache | Rare | Prominent |
| General aches | Slight | Usual; often severe |
| Fatigue, weakness | Quite mild | Can last 2–3 weeks |
| Extreme exhaustion | Never | Early and prominent |
| Stuffy nose | Common | Sometimes |
| Sneezing | Usual | Sometimes |
| Sore throat | Common | Sometimes |
| Chest discomfort, cough | Mild—moderate hacking cough | Common; can become severe |
| Complications | Sinus congestion or earache | Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening |
| Prevention | None | Annual vaccination |
| Treatment | Temporary relief of symptoms | Antiviral medicines |



Additional Resources

For information regarding influenza activity across the state, please visit the following website:

Florida DOH Bureau of Epidemiology–Influenza Surveillance

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/htopics/flu

or contact your local county health department for information in your area.

For information regarding influenza activity nationally and worldwide, please visit the following websites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

World Health Organization:

<http://www.who.int/en/>

For information regarding influenza vaccine recommendations and supply please visit the following website:

Florida DOH Bureau of Immunization

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/immune/influenza.html



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INFLUENZA

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



What patients and healthcare workers need to know about influenza...

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WHAT IS THE FLU AND HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Influenza (commonly called “the flu”) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Infection with influenza viruses can result in illness ranging from mild to severe and life-threatening complications. An estimated 10% to 20% of U.S. residents get the flu each year. An average of 114,000 people are hospitalized for flu-related complications and 36,000 Americans die each year from complications of the flu.

At Risk Population

Certain people are at increased risk for serious complications from the flu. This group includes: children 6-23 months old, people age 65 years and older, adults and children with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women.

Community health centers have an added concern about influenza due to the nature of the setting where caregivers come in close contact with multiple patients on a daily basis.

Other concerns for community health centers regarding influenza besides the spreading of the virus from staff to patients and vice versa include:

- A population that is less likely to have had access to regular healthcare and therefore have not been previously vaccinated or could not afford to be vaccinated.
- Over-crowding in common waiting rooms. Children sharing common toys and playing together.
- High concentration of an immigrant population with unknown or undocumented health conditions.
- Rotating part-time staff that can introduce the virus to multiple facilities.

Preventing the Flu

The best prevention method against the flu is vaccination. Getting a flu shot every year is recommended for healthcare workers and staff who come in close contact with patients. Caregivers, staff and even cleaning crews can spread influenza from patient to patient.

Other methods to help prevent the spread of influenza are:

1. Wash your hands often. This will help protect you from a variety of illnesses, including the flu.
2. Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze will help protect those around you from getting sick.
3. Avoid contact with others when you are sick. If possible, staff should stay home from work if they are sick. In addition, isolating sick patients whenever possible will help prevent the spread of influenza to other patients.

Complications

Some of the complications caused by the flu include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

If patients or healthcare staff are in a group that is considered to be at high risk for complications from the flu and they get flu-like symptoms, they should consult with a health-care provider immediately.

Early warning signs of complications that need immediate attention can include:

- High or prolonged fever
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Near fainting or fainting
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Muscle ache

Flu vaccination is recommended for all healthcare workers and community health-care staff that come in contact with patients.

Other Issues

Outbreaks. An outbreak of influenza in any healthcare setting can be a serious life-threatening situation. If an outbreak of influenza is suspected, notify your local county health department immediately.

Testing. Specimens can be submitted to the State Laboratories in Jacksonville and Tampa for testing to verify possible influenza outbreaks. The local county health department will work closely with the State Department of Health to determine testing needs.

Protective Measures. It is recommended that patients in waiting rooms with suspected respiratory illnesses be supplied with masks and tissues to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses to other patients.

Vaccine Timing. The best time to receive the flu vaccine is during October and November. However, getting immunized in December or later can still provide protection against the flu. Typically in adults, antibody protection against the flu will develop about two weeks after receiving the vaccination.

Staff Vaccination. It is highly recommended that all staff be vaccinated not only to prevent the spread of influenza to patients but also to prevent the spread of influenza from the facility to the community by exposing family and friends to the virus.

