



Influenza for The General Public

What is influenza?

- An infection caused by the influenza A or B virus.

How does a person get influenza?

- The virus is spread:
 - directly from person to person through coughing and sneezing
 - indirectly from touching contaminated surfaces and objects, and then touching the eyes/nose/mouth.
- The virus can survive on some surfaces for up to 48 hours.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Symptoms develop 1 to 3 days after a person has become infected and is more severe than the common cold (see chart below).

- Fever may not be prominent in children or the elderly.
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are not common in adults but may occur in children.
- In severe cases, influenza may result in pneumonia, bronchitis, kidney or heart failure.
- Most symptoms resolve in 5 to 7 days, but cough and fatigue can last 2 weeks or more.

What is Pandemic Influenza?

- Pandemic Influenza is a worldwide outbreak of Influenza.
- It is caused by a new type of virus which occurs every 10 to 30 years. Because the virus is completely new, the population has little or no immunity to it. This means that more people will develop the illness than in non-pandemic years (i.e. H1N1 in 2009).

Common Cold versus Influenza		
Symptom	Common Cold	Influenza
Fever	Rare	Usual, high fever (102°F/39°C to 104°F/40°C) sudden onset, lasts 3-4 days
Aches and Pains	Sometimes, mild	Usual, often severe
Extreme Fatigue	Unusual	Usual, early onset
Tired and weak	Sometimes, mild	Usual, may last 2-3 weeks or more
Headache	Rare	Usual, can be severe
Sore Throat	Common	Common
Cough	Common (mild to moderate)	Very Common (can be severe)
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Sometimes
Chest Discomfort	Sometimes (mild to moderate)	Usual (can become severe)
Complications	Can lead to sinus congestion or earache	Can lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure; can worsen a current chronic respiratory condition; can be life threatening

Immunize Canada <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/is-it-cold-or-flu/pub-eng.pdf>

How is influenza treated?

- Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil) helps to lessen fever, aches and pains. A.S.A. (Aspirin) should not be given to children, teenagers or young adults due to the possibility of developing Reye's Syndrome (a very serious neurological disease).
- Gargle with a glass of warm water containing ½ teaspoon of salt to ease a sore throat. Lozenges and sugarless hard candy are also effective.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol – smoking irritates the airways and alcohol dries the tissues which makes them more susceptible to other infections.
- Prescription medication(s) may be prescribed by your doctor.

How is influenza prevented?

- Influenza immunization is the best method of prevention.
- Wash hands frequently with soap & water.
- Use hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol when soap & water are not available.
- Cough or sneeze into your arm or sleeve instead of your hands.
- Keep hands away from your face.
- Avoid crowded places.
- Stay home and away from others if you become sick.
- Do not visit people who have the flu, if you can avoid it.

What if my child or I have symptoms?

- Do not attend daycare, school, place of work, social gathering places (eg: coffee shop) or volunteer activities while symptoms are present.
- If you are a healthcare worker, do not attend work for 5 days after onset of symptoms, unless

otherwise directed by Occupational Health & Safety at your place of work.

When should I call my doctor?

- Call your doctor if any of the following symptoms develop:
 - chest pains or pressure
 - shortness of breath
 - difficult or rapid breathing
 - coughing up bloody sputum
 - wheezing
 - a fever greater than 39° C that lasts more than 3 days or if it is getting worse
 - you start to feel better and suddenly get a fever over 39° C and start to feel sick again
 - sudden drowsiness or dizziness,
 - disorientation or confusion
 - Extreme pain in your ear.
- For Adults, call 911 if:
 - has severe trouble breathing
 - has blue lips
 - has a seizure.
- For children, call the doctor if the child:
 - has a heart or lung disease or any chronic illness which requires regular medical care
 - has a disease or is taking drugs or treatments that affect the immune system
 - has trouble breathing
 - is less than 6 months old and has a temperature over 38.5°C
 - is irritable and cannot be calmed down
 - is listless and doesn't play with toys
 - drinks little fluid and does not urinate at least every 6 hours when awake
 - has severe vomiting or diarrhea.
 - Symptoms improve and suddenly get worse.
- For children, call 911 if the child:
 - has severe trouble breathing
 - has blue lips
 - is limp or unable to move
 - has a stiff neck
 - seems confused
 - has a seizure.

For more information contact:

- Provincial Health Information Line **811**
- Population and Public Health **306-655-4612**
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Health website: www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza-flu
- Public Health Agency of Canada website: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/flupc-eng.php for information in other languages