



Influenza

What is influenza?

Influenza (the "flu") is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. There are many different strains, or types, of influenza and not all affect human beings. However, some strains, such as avian and swine influenza (including H1N1) viruses, first develop as flu strains which affect animals like birds or pigs, then change over time, or "mutate," into strains which can infect people.

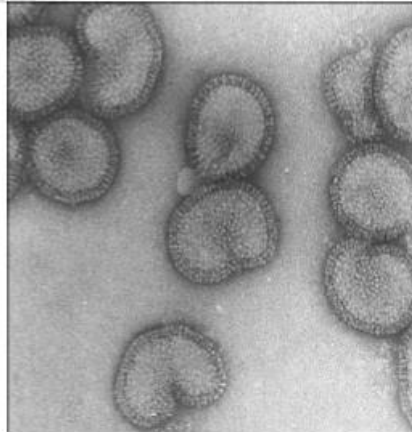
Who is at risk?

Anyone can catch the flu – most recover without serious complications. However, elderly people, pregnant women, young children and people with compromised immune systems or chronic illnesses are at especially high risk for developing serious flu complications.

What are the symptoms?

The flu usually comes on suddenly and may include these symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea



How is influenza diagnosed?

Your illness might be the flu if you experience sudden onset of body aches, high fever and / or respiratory symptoms. This chance is increased if your illness occurs during so-called "flu season" (typically November – April in the Northern Hemisphere). Influenza can also occur outside of the typical flu season. It is impossible to tell for sure if you have the flu based on symptoms alone. Your doctor can perform tests to see if you have the flu, if you are in the first few days of your illness.

How long does the flu last?

Influenza symptoms generally last about a week.

What is the treatment for influenza?

Getting plenty of rest, drinking fluids and staying home from work or school to avoid spreading the disease to others is the best course of action. If you are in a high risk group for developing serious flu complications, or your symptoms persist or dramatically worsen, you should immediately consult your doctor.

In some severe cases of seasonal or novel (ex: H1N1 "swine flu") influenza, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medicines for you. Antiviral drugs work best if started within the first 2 days of the onset of flu symptoms. They can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent the development of serious flu complications.



How can I keep from getting influenza?

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but maintaining good health habits may also help protect you against the flu. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water. Keep hands away from your mucous membranes, such as your mouth, nose and eyes. Eat right, sleep well, rest and avoid unnecessary stress.

Hand Hygiene as Flu Protective Measure

05/01/2009

As H1N1 influenza A (swine flu) spreads, keeping hands clean is one of the most important ways to prevent infection and illness. "Frequent handwashing is probably the single most effective and simplest intervention you can do to protect yourself and your family," according to Dr. Judy Daly, spokesperson for the American Society for Microbiology.

"Influenza A viruses, of which swine flu is one, are fragile viruses that can be easily destroyed through proper hygiene, including use of soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers," says Daly, director of the Clinical Microbiology Laboratories, Primary Children's Medical Center, Salt Lake City.

Washing hands with soap and clean water for 20 seconds is a sensible strategy for hand hygiene in non-healthcare settings and is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other experts. If soap and clean water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is recommended.

Research* has shown that flu viruses can survive up to 48 hours on hard, nonporous surfaces and up to 12 hours on cloth, paper, and tissues. Measurable quantities of influenza A viruses can be transferred from stainless steel surfaces to hands for up to 24 hours and from tissues to hands for up to 15 minutes. Virus can survive on hands for up to 5 minutes after transfer from environmental surfaces.

"Flu viruses most frequently enter the body when contaminated hands touch mucous membranes of the nose, eyes, and mouth. Frequent hand hygiene certainly makes this transfer less likely," says Daly.

The American Society for Microbiology has downloadable educational hand hygiene materials, including posters and brochures for children and adults, available at www.washup.org. The site also contains information on ordering printed materials.

*Bean, B. et al. Survival of influenza viruses on environmental surfaces. J Infect Dis. 1982 Jul;146(1):47-51.

Infection Control Today <http://www.infectioncontrolday.com/hotnews/hand-hygiene-flu-protection.html>

Daily Information

In healthcare settings, hand hygiene can prevent potentially fatal infections from spreading from patient to patient and from patient to healthcare worker and vice-versa.

This new online training course reviews the key concepts of hand hygiene and other Standard Precautions to prevent healthcare-associated infections. It is intended for healthcare providers and includes a self-paced navigation program that allows users to learn through both text and image-based pages. The course also includes several interactive activities and questions, which reemphasize the learning objectives throughout. A unique close-captioned 60-second video demonstrates the appropriate technique for handwashing mid-way through the course. At the conclusion of the course there are creative posters and screen savers available for download.

The training course is available at [Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#).

Additional CDC Resources

- [Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings](#)
- [Clean Hands Save Lives!](#)
- [Handwashing After a Disaster](#)

Sebelius teaches cough etiquette!

<http://abcnews.go.com/video/playerIndex?id=8601871>

Hope you can all watch this. With flu season upon us, people are looking at things like "nodding" and "elbowing" instead of shaking hands. So many of us still cough or sneeze into our hands like Mom taught us! Get in the know and start using your sleeve if you don't have a tissue. And, if you forget and use your hands, clean them immediately.