

# INFLUENZA

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

### **What is Influenza?**

*Influenza, commonly called the “flu”, is a highly infectious viral disease of the respiratory tract. Persons of any age can get influenza. Most people are ill with influenza for only a few days. However, the very young and elderly and those with chronic illnesses can develop serious complications as a result of influenza, and require hospitalization. Influenza also causes thousands of deaths each year, mostly among the elderly.*

### **How is it spread?**

Influenza is spread from person to person by direct contact with respiratory droplets through coughing and sneezing. It may also be spread indirectly by articles contaminated with respiratory secretions. The flu virus enters the body through mucous membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth.

### **How is it treated?**

Control of fever with acetaminophen or other antipyretic (children or teenagers with influenza should not receive salicylates, such as aspirin, because of the resulting risk of developing Reye syndrome), adequate rest, and drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration are some measures used to alleviate flu symptoms. Antiviral therapy may be prescribed by a physician for immunocompromised persons or those with chronic conditions that might predispose them to a severe or complicated influenza infection.

### **How is it prevented?**

- Avoid contact with infected or sick people whenever possible.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue and throw the tissue away immediately. Wash hands after using a tissue for coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with others.
- There are various types of influenza vaccine available in the U.S.

### **SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA**

- Sudden onset of fever (100-103°F in adults and often higher in children)
- Chills
- Sore Throat
- Headache
- Generalized muscle aches
- Dry cough
- Sensitivity to light
- Extreme fatigue
- Children may also experience nausea, vomiting and diarrhea along with respiratory symptoms

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