Influenza (Flu) Quick Facts

Indiana Department of Health

What is influenza (flu)?

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Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the respiratory tract. Flu illness can be mild to severe and in some cases may even cause death. Although anyone can become infected with flu, people 65 years and older, young children, and people with other health conditions are at higher risk for hospitalization and complications from flu.

Flu Symptoms

Symptoms of flu typically begin two days after exposure but can range from 1-4 days after being exposed. Symptom length can vary, but typically last for 2-7 days. Complications from flu infection may include pneumonia, exacerbation of existing health conditions, hospitalization, and even death.

Symptoms Include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Muscle Aches
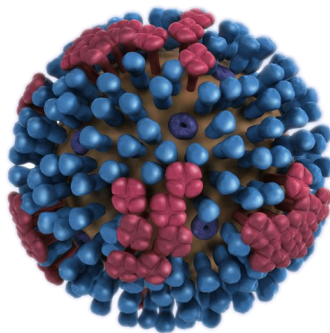
Flu Prevention

Since flu viruses change over time, it is important to get vaccinated every year.

Good respiratory hygiene is also important to prevent the spread of flu, including:

- Covering for nose and mouth when coughing and/or sneezing.
- Washing your hands after coughing or sneezing with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work, school, and social gatherings if you are sick.

How is influenza spread?

Flu is spread from close contact with persons who are sick with the flu virus or from touching surfaces or objects that the flu virus is on. Infection can occur when flu viruses contact the eyes, mouth, or nose and through breathing in droplets from a sneeze or cough.

People may be able to spread the virus to others one day before they show symptoms and up to seven (7) days after becoming sick.

What is the treatment for flu?

Most people with flu have mild symptoms and do not typically require healthcare intervention or antiviral medication. Fever-reducing medicine, cough drops, water, and plenty of rest are usually what people with mild symptoms are prescribed.

However, if you have symptoms of flu and are at an increased risk a healthcare provider may prescribe antiviral medication.

For additional information on Influenza, visit:
https://www.in.gov/health/idepd/influenza/

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