



Flu

What is flu?

Influenza is an acute viral disease of the respiratory tract. There are several types of influenza virus, which keep changing to overcome immunity in the population.

Is it infectious?

Yes, respiratory droplets spread all the influenza viruses during sneezing or coughing and during close contact. Indirectly, like many viruses, they can be spread by the hands, handkerchiefs and tissues.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period is the time when someone has the virus but is not displaying symptoms. This period is usually 24 – 72 hours.

What are the symptoms?

Flu symptoms come on quickly and include fever and aching muscles, it also makes you feel too unwell to continue your usual activities.

- Sudden fever – a temperature of 38°C or above
- Dry chesty cough
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Chills
- Aching muscles
- Limb or joint pain
- Diarrhoea or upset stomach
- Sore throat
- Runny or blocked nose
- Sneezing
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty sleeping



Your symptoms will usually peak after two to three days and you should begin to feel much better within five to eight days. However you may have a lingering cough and still feel very tired for a further two to three weeks.

Treatment

There is no treatment to kill the flu virus, but if you have it, it will usually be possible for you to care for yourself effectively at home.

- Rest while symptoms are severe, particularly whilst feverish.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Make sure you have plenty of handkerchiefs and tissues but that they are not handled by others.
- Take paracetamol to reduce fever and alleviate aches and discomfort.
- If symptoms persist or worsen, contact your GP.

Complications

Flu complications mostly effects people in high risk groups such as the elderly, pregnant women and those who have long term medical condition or weakened immune system. The most common complication is a bacterial chest infection. Occasionally, this can become serious and develop into pneumonia. A course of antibiotics usually cures a chest infection or pneumonia, but it can very occasionally become life threatening, particularly in the frail and elderly.

Preventing Flu

Good Hygiene

- Make sure you wash your hands regularly with soap and water.
- Clean surfaces like your keyboard, telephone and door handle regularly to get rid of germs.
- Use tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a bin as soon as possible.

Flu Jab

- People aged 65 over
- Pregnant women
- People with a serious medical condition
- People living in a residential or nursing home
- Carers of people at risk of complications of the flu
- Healthcare professionals



The flu jab is available from October each year; if you think you need it talk to your GP.

Do you need to have a flu jab every year?

Yes, if you fit the criteria, you should have your seasonal flu vaccination every year, so that you stay protected. The viruses that cause flu change every year, so this winter's flu will be different from last winter.

Test your knowledge

Test your knowledge		
Please tick the correct answer	True	False
1. Influenza is an acute viral disease of the respiratory tract.		
2. Respiratory droplets spread all the influenza viruses during sneezing or coughing and during close contact.		
3. Your symptoms will usually peak after two to three days and you should begin to feel much better within five to eight days.		

Remember:

- Respiratory droplets spread all the influenza viruses during sneezing or coughing and during close contact.
- Flu symptoms come on quickly and include fever and aching muscles, it also makes you feel too unwell to continue your usual activities.
- Incubation period is usually 24 – 72 hours.
- Your symptoms will usually peak after two to three days and you should begin to feel much better within five to eight days.
- There is no treatment to kill the virus.
- If you fit the criteria make sure you have your flu jab.

Factsheet Activity <i>Please tick appropriate box when activity has been completed</i>	
Check that your healthcare setting has information for service users and staff regarding Flu.	
Check colleagues are aware that service users have been vaccinated if they fit the criteria.	
Check colleagues are aware they are entitled to the flu jab free if provide direct care to service users.	