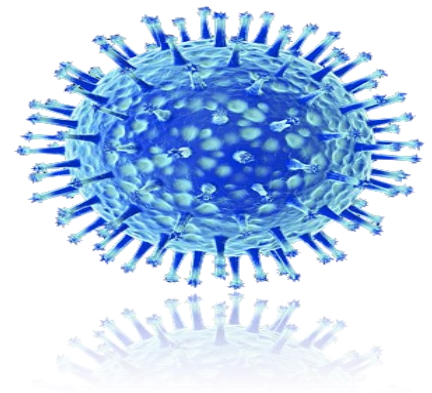




island health



Influenza

Influenza (the flu)

The flu is an acute viral disease of the upper respiratory tract. Symptoms may include:

- A fever, non-productive cough, sneezing, headache, muscle pain, fatigue, nasal congestion and sore throat
- Begins 1—3 days after exposure, and lasts approximately 5—7 days

Pulmonary complications of influenza include: pneumonia, croup, asthma and bronchitis

Did You Know... The word 'influenza' comes from the Italian word 'influentia' because it was believed that the influence of the planets, stars and moon caused the flu!

The influenza virus:

- Can live up to 48 hours on hard, non-porous surfaces (i.e. doorknobs, phones, keyboards) and up to 12 hours on cloth, paper and tissues
- Constantly mutates into new strains so, after having influenza, you develop no immunity
- 20—30% people carry and transmit the influenza virus but are asymptomatic

Island Health: Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC)

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How is it transmitted?

A person with influenza is contagious from approximately 1 day before symptoms begin to 7 days after.

Influenza is spread by:

- Droplets expelled when sneezing, coughing, breathing and talking
- Contact with contaminated surfaces

Influenza exposure risk increases in areas where people live in close contact, such as in Residential care facilities

Prophylaxis and Treatment

Prophylaxis includes:

- Yearly influenza Vaccine
- Antiviral Medications Post-Exposure, such as Oseltamivir (Tamiflu)

Treatment:

Although there is no 'cure' for the flu, antiviral medications may be administered to shorten the duration of fever/symptoms and reduce complications. These should be started as early as possible (preferably within the first 48 hours of symptom onset).

Disclaimer: All content in this reference guide is presented only as of the date printed or indicated, and may be superseded by subsequent documents or for other reasons. In addition, you are responsible to ensure you are receiving the most up to date information.



Influenza

Infection Prevention & Control

Influenza Vaccine:

- Protects against the three or four strains that research predicts will be the most common that year
- Is important for individuals at high-risk for developing serious complications
- Is important for health care providers, and those who live with, or care for, high risk people

In order to prevent the spread of Influenza:

- Practice respiratory etiquette and support others to do the same
 - ◆ Cough and sneeze into your arm, not your hand
 - ◆ Wear a mask if you have respiratory signs and symptoms
 - ◆ Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Minimize close contact with symptomatic people when possible
- Stay home if you are symptomatic
- Clean/disinfect commonly used, high-touch surfaces (i.e. doorknobs, light switches, phones, keyboards)

Patients/residents with suspected or known influenza should be:

- Placed on droplet and contact precautions (even before lab confirmation)
- Placed in a private room if possible, otherwise, in a bed that has appropriate spacing and barriers from adjacent beds and designate appropriate equipment

Symptoms/Description	Influenza	Common Cold
Fever	Usually high (except in elderly)	Sometimes
Chills, aches, pain	Frequent	Slight
Loss of appetite	Sometimes	Sometimes
Cough	Usual	Sometimes
Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes
Sniffles or Sneezes	Sometimes	Common
Involves whole body	Often	Never
Symptoms appear quickly	Always	More gradual
Extreme Tiredness	Common	Rare
Complications	Pneumonia: can be life threatening	Sinus infection / Ear infection