

Influenza (Flu)



Communicable Disease Division
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Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have been exposed to **influenza** (“the flu”). Influenza is a highly contagious, respiratory disease caused by an influenza virus. Influenza season varies but usually starts in October and peaks between December and March.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Symptoms of influenza begin suddenly. They include fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, extreme tiredness, dry cough, and sore throat. Young children may also have nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Nausea and vomiting alone are caused by other germs, not influenza.

How is influenza spread?

Influenza is easily spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing or sneezing. Surfaces and hands contaminated by mucus and saliva can also spread influenza viruses. A person is infectious from the day before having symptoms to seven days after becoming ill.

How is influenza treated?

Getting enough rest and drinking plenty of fluids is important. Over-the-counter medications, when used as directed, may lessen fever, headache, and muscles aches. Your healthcare provider might prescribe an antiviral medication to reduce the length of illness.

How do you control the spread?

- Annual flu vaccines are recommended for everyone 6 months and older, unless you have medical reason to avoid the vaccine. Pregnant women should also receive a flu vaccine. Any person that wants to lower their risk of getting the flu should get a flu vaccine.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water
- Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing.
- When using a tissue, dispose into wastebasket and wash hands well afterwards
- Avoid touching the eyes, mouth, or nose
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces
- Stay home during the first days of illness when symptoms are most severe and the infection is most contagious
- Staff and children should remain home until they have been fever free for at least 24 hours.

How do I get more information?

For more information about influenza (“the flu”), contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press “0”.