



RUNNYMEDE
HEALTHCARE CENTRE

625 Runnymede Rd.
Toronto, ON M6S 3A3
T 416 762 7316
F 416 762 3836
www.runnymedehc.ca



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT INFECTION CONTROL
AT 416.762.7316, EXT. 2238.

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Influenza (*flu*)

We make it possible.

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WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

INFLUENZA (OR *FLU*) is a contagious respiratory illness that is caused by the influenza virus.

HOW IS THE FLU SPREAD?

Flu is spread via respiratory droplets of a sneeze or cough from a person with influenza.

Flu germs can live for up to 48 hours on common surfaces like keyboards, telephone receivers and door knobs. You can get infected by touching contaminated surfaces with your hands and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

HOW LONG IS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH THE FLU CONTAGIOUS?

Most people are contagious one day before their flu symptoms surface, and up to five days after becoming ill. Those with weakened immune systems, such as children and seniors, can infect people with flu for even longer.

WHAT COMPLICATIONS CAN DEVELOP?

Complications in flu patients could include dehydration, bacterial pneumonia, and sinus or ear infections. If you have a chronic medical condition, like asthma, diabetes or congestive heart failure, influenza may worsen it.

At-risk groups for developing flu complications include children (under 5 years of age), pregnant women and seniors (over 65 years of age).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Flu symptoms most commonly include the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough or sore throat
- Runny and/or stuffy nose
- Headaches, muscle and/or body aches
- Fatigue
- Vomiting or diarrhea.

WHAT IS THE BEST TREATMENT?

If you have flu symptoms, the best thing to do is stay home and rest! Avoid going to school or work where you can infect others. Other helpful measures include:

- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Washing hands often to prevent spread of flu germs
- Consulting a pharmacist to find the right combination of over-the-counter medications for your symptoms.

SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

You should consult a physician if you experience the following:

- Prolonged fever, (more than three days)
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or wheezing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Confusion, drowsiness or difficulty waking
- Extreme pain in the ears
- Severe coughing or coughing up dark, bloody mucus

FLU PREVENTION THROUGH VACCINATION

The best way to prevent getting the flu is to have an influenza vaccine administered each flu season. An influenza vaccine or flu shot is an annual vaccine to protect you from the influenza virus.

The vaccine can be administered to everyone, including children (6 months of age or older), pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions.

Those who work in a healthcare setting and regularly come into contact with high-risk individuals should be vaccinated annually.

Note: the influenza vaccine does not protect against flu-like illnesses caused by non-influenza viruses.