

INFLUENZA (FLU) Reportable Disease

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a **flu vaccine** each year.

CAUSE

Influenza viruses

SYMPTOMS

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever, or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)

SPREAD

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or possibly their nose.

INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

Usually 1 to 4 days, average is 2 days

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days **after** becoming sick. Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

EXCLUSION

Child care and School: Stay home for at least 24 hours after becoming fever free or finishing medication if you are ill with flu or any respiratory illness.

DIAGNOSIS

The accuracy of clinical diagnosis of influenza on the basis of symptoms alone is limited because symptoms from illness caused by other pathogens can overlap considerably with influenza. Influenza surveillance by state and local health departments and CDC can provide information regarding the presence of influenza viruses in the community. Laboratory diagnostic procedures may be used.

TREATMENT

Antiviral drugs may be prescribed, but many children will only be prescribed rest, increased fluid intake, and other supportive treatment. Control of fever with acetaminophen may be necessary. Children and teens (less than 20 years old) sick with the flu should never take aspirin or aspirin-containing medications without consulting your health care provider.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season.
- Wash hands often with soap and warm water.
- Use tissue or upper arm when you cough and sneeze. Dispose of the tissue in a covered trash bin.
- Clean shared items (e.g. phones, keyboards, office equipment, toys, etc) more often.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid people who are sick with respiratory illness.
- Exclude children with respiratory illness from daycare and school.
- Stay home for at least 24 hours after becoming fever free or finishing medication if you are ill with flu or any respiratory illness.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/flu/>