

## INFLUENZA\* (flu)

### Incubation, Signs and Symptoms

**Incubation Period:** Usually 2 days, but can vary from 1 - 4 days.

**Signs and Symptoms:** Sudden onset of an acute viral disease with symptoms of fever, chills, headache, sore muscles, and a general feeling of being unwell. Flu is associated with runny nose, sore throat, and cough. Cough is often severe and lasts longer than other symptoms which generally subside in 2-7 days. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may occur in children.

### Methods of Transmission

Influenza is spread by direct contact with respiratory secretions or droplets from an infected person and indirect contact with articles freshly soiled by discharges from an infected person. The virus is excreted in discharges from the nose and throat and can live in dried mucus for several hours.

### Minimum Control Measures

**Communicable Period:** Probably 3-5 days after onset of symptoms; can be up to 7 days after the onset of symptoms in younger children.

**Control:** **EXCLUDE child who has fever or feels unwell.** Otherwise, exclusion is not generally practical. Antiviral medications, if given within 2 days of illness onset to otherwise healthy individuals, can reduce the duration of uncomplicated influenza illness. Influenza is generally more severe in very young children who have had no prior exposure. Influenza can also be severe in elderly populations. Sometimes influenza resembles a cold or other respiratory virus. Because young, otherwise healthy children are at increased risk for influenza-related hospitalizations, it is recommended that children aged six months through 5 years receive influenza vaccination. It is also recommended that household contacts (anyone who spends a significant amount of time in the home) and out-of-home caregivers of children 6 months through 59 months receive influenza vaccination. Annual immunizations are effective in preventing infections. Health care providers may prescribe antiviral medications for exposed individuals to reduce influenza transmission. Individuals exposed to influenza should consult with their health care provider.

### Other Information

**Children must not be given aspirin or salicylate-containing compounds because administration of these products increases the risks of subsequent Reye syndrome.** Acetaminophen may be used for fever control. Reye syndrome is a rare but life-threatening illness. Early signs and symptoms are vomiting and confusion. Medical care should be sought immediately if Reye syndrome is suspected.