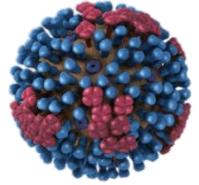


## FLU – INFLUENZA



Influenza is an acute infectious respiratory illness. Produced by a virus which has the capacity to easily spread from one person to another due to coughs and sneezes. The virus is especially common in winter and can create a seasonal epidemic.



The "flu" caused by the Influenza Virus has multiple serotypes which change every year. For this reason, the Flu vaccine needs to be given annually.

### Symptoms

Influenza begins with chills and a fever. Accompanied by a headache, aches in the muscles and joints, tiredness, weakness, general discomfort, nasal congestion, sore throat and a dry cough.

**Is it serious?** Most people who become infected recover in less than a week without the need for treatment or hospital care. However, it can be more serious for people with chronic respiratory problems, diabetes, the elderly or people with heart conditions.

Parents of children with symptoms should consult with a doctor and follow their advice. Children should not go to school in order to avoid infecting others.

**How is it spread?** The main way Influenza passes from someone infected with the virus to another healthy individual is by inhaling infected droplets in the air that have been expelled during talking, coughing or sneezing. It can also be transmitted by direct contact, that is if we touch a contaminated surface such as the hand of a sick person and then bring our hand into contact with our mouth or nose. The affected person is infectious 24 hours before the onset of symptoms and between 5 to 7 days later. The incubation period varies from 1 to 7 days after being infected with the virus, although the average incubation period is 3 to 4 days.



To avoid infecting other people:

1. Use a disposable paper handkerchief (Kleenex) when you cough or sneeze. Try to cough and sneeze into your elbow and avoid sneezing and coughing into your hands.
2. Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing and before contact with babies, other people or objects that are shared.
3. Do not go to places where you could infect others: work, school or public places.

Recommendations:

If you already have the Flu:

- Rest and drink **plenty** of liquids (water, juice, soups).
- Avoid tobacco and alcohol.
- You can use medications that relieve symptoms (to lower your fever).
- Antibiotics do **not reduce symptoms or speed up recovery** because **they** are not effective against diseases **caused** by viruses.
- Do not give aspirin to children or adolescents.

The **ONLY** effective measure to prevent the Flu is to **vaccinate**. The vaccine protects us against the type of Flu that is active each year, but it does **NOT protect us from other viral infections** such as the common cold.