



Influenza (Flu) The Basics

Influenza (in-floo-en-zah), also called the flu, is a serious, highly contagious viral infection of the nose, throat and lungs. Although colds and other viruses may cause similar symptoms, influenza weakens a person much more than other viruses.

Influenza lowers the body's ability to fight other infections that may develop with influenza putting you at risk for developing pneumonia and other complications.

Influenza is very contagious and spreads easily from person to person!

- When a person with influenza coughs or sneezes, millions of viruses spray into the air.
- If you breathe the virus into your mouth or nose, or you touch objects which have been infected with the virus - like phones, keyboards, and door handles - you can get influenza.
- People with influenza can be contagious for about a day before their symptoms appear, and up to a week afterwards.
- Infected children, adults, and healthcare workers can easily spread influenza to those at risk; anyone over six months of age who wants to avoid spreading influenza should consider getting a flu shot.

Symptoms

If you have influenza, you may have some or all of these symptoms:

- ✓ Sudden fever
- ✓ Sore throat
- ✓ Dry cough
- ✓ Chills
- ✓ Muscle aches
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Extreme weakness and fatigue



Children can also have earaches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Most people are sick in bed for 2-7 days. People may feel weak and tired for up to two weeks; the dry cough can last even longer.

Source: Health Canada, 2008