

What is Influenza?

Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by the Influenza virus. Typically people become ill during the winter months. Although we see Influenza every year the virus keeps changing so we are all susceptible.

What are the symptoms of Influenza?

- Cough
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Some young children may have vomiting, diarrhea, or an earache.

Influenza can lead to pneumonia in people who have a compromised immune system.

What about the flu shot?

The flu shot may or may not prevent you from getting Influenza. However, people who have had the flu shot have a shorter milder illness and are less likely to get pneumonia. The flu shot will not protect you against the “stomach flu” or other respiratory illnesses.

How is Influenza spread?

When a person has Influenza the illness is spread by the droplets generated through coughing and sneezing. These droplets can directly infect another person if they breathe them in. But, they can settle on hard horizontal surfaces to be picked up by our hands and spread to ourselves or others. This is why we must use additional precautions.

What are additional precautions?

It is very important to contain the illness so it does not spread to others. We do this by:

1. Isolating Influenza patients and putting a “Droplet Precautions” sign on the door.
2. Wearing a yellow long sleeved gown, gloves, mask and goggles when entering the room to care for the patient.
3. Washing our hands before entering the room and after leaving the room.

How long will I be isolated?

You will be isolated for 5 days or until you are symptom free, whichever is shorter. Once 5 days have passed you are no longer able to pass the illness to another person.

What about family and visitors?

Family and visitors must first talk with a nurse before coming into the room. Young visitors should be closely supervised.

- All visitors must wash hands before entering the room. After leaving the room visitors must wash hands with available waterless hand rub.
- Any visitors who have known health problems should be encouraged to not visit.
- Visitors must not visit other patients in the hospital during the same trip. This helps to ensure we do not spread the bacteria.
- If the hospital has an influenza outbreak visitors will not be allowed. Your telephone will be turned on so you can communicate with your loved ones.

What can I do to help?

1. Remind **all** staff caring for you to wash their hands when they enter your room and when they leave.
2. Wash your hands after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
3. Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any questions.

What should I do at home?

When at home you may pass influenza to others.

- Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Others who share your home should wash their hands often.
- Avoid going to visit anyone in a long term care home or a hospital until you are well.
- No special cleaning or laundry precautions are needed.