

Influenza (Flu)

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to **Influenza (Flu)** while at child care.

What is Influenza?

Influenza, also called the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a group of respiratory viruses called influenza viruses.

What are the symptoms of Influenza?

The symptoms of Influenza are: sudden onset of fever, headache, chills, muscle aches and pains, sore throat, cough, mild pinkeye, decreased energy, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, and in young infants, croup, bronchiolitis or pneumonia.

How serious is Influenza?

Most people who get the flu will have a mild illness, will not need medical care and will recover in less than two weeks. Some people, however; are at high risk for developing complications from the flu. People at high risk for developing flu-related complications are: children younger than 5 (especially children younger than 2), adults 65 and older, pregnant women and people with underlying chronic health conditions such as asthma, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disorders, liver disorders and people with weakened immune systems.

How does a person get Influenza?

Influenza is highly contagious and can be spread when droplets containing the virus are sneezed or coughed into the air. Infection can also be easily spread when a person gets the virus on her/his hands while touching a contaminated object, then touches her/his eyes, nose, or mouth.

How long does it take to come down with Influenza (flu) after a person is exposed?

Symptoms generally appear 1-3 days after a child is exposed to the virus.

When is a person with Influenza contagious?

A person with Influenza is usually able to spread the infection from the day before symptoms appear until 7 days after the onset of symptoms.

How can I help prevent the spread of Influenza?

- Get vaccinated every year against the flu. Vaccination against the flu is recommended for everyone 6 months and older and especially for those who are at highest risk of developing complications from the flu as well as people who live with and care for those at highest risk.
- Wash hands well and often with soap and water, especially after wiping a nose or touching oral or nasal secretions.
- Clean, rinse, and sanitize toys and surfaces regularly at child care (especially mouthed toys).

What is the treatment for Influenza?

The illness usually gets better on its own without any treatment. Sometimes physicians may prescribe antiviral medications for those at highest risk of developing complications from the flu.

If my child develops Influenza, must s/he stay away from child care?

Children with severe respiratory illness or fever should not attend child care until all symptoms have resolved and have been without a fever for 24 hours without any fever-reducing medicines.

