

COLD OR INFLUENZA

How to tell the difference

Symptoms	Cold	Influenza
Fever	Rare	Characteristic, high (102–104F); lasts 3–4 days
Headache	Rare	Prominent
General aches	Slight	Usual; often severe
Fatigue, weakness	Quite mild	Can last 2–3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Early and prominent
Stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild—moderate hacking cough	Common; can become severe
Complications	Sinus congestion or earache	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening
Prevention	None	Annual vaccination
Treatment	Temporary relief of symptoms	Antiviral medicines



Additional Resources

For information regarding influenza activity across the state, please visit the following website:

Florida DOH Bureau of Epidemiology–Influenza Surveillance
http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/htopics/flu
 or contact your local county health department for information in your area.

For information regarding influenza activity nationally and worldwide, please visit the following websites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

World Health Organization:
<http://www.who.int/en/>

For information regarding influenza vaccine recommendations and supply please visit the following website:

Florida DOH Bureau of Immunization
http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/immune/influenza.html



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INFLUENZA

A GUIDE FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES



What residents and caregivers need to know about influenza...

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WHAT IS THE FLU AND HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Influenza (commonly called “the flu”) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Infection with influenza viruses can result in illness ranging from mild to severe and life-threatening complications. An estimated 10% to 20% of U.S. residents get the flu each year. An average of 114,000 people are hospitalized for flu-related complications and 36,000 Americans die each year from complications of the flu.

At Risk Population

Certain people are at increased risk for serious complications from the flu. This group includes people age 65 years and older and people of any age with chronic medical conditions.

Long-term care facilities (LTCF) have an added concern about influenza due to the nature of the institutional setting in which residents, visitors and staff are in close contact on a regular basis. A LTCF is defined, as a skilled nursing facility, nursing home, assisted living facility, adult family-care home, board and care facility, or any other similar adult care center that provides medical care to those with chronic care needs.

Other concerns for LTCFs regarding influenza besides the spreading of the virus from staff to patients and vice versa include:

- High concentration of a population at risk for complications and death not only due to age but also chronic health conditions.
- Difficulty in maintaining sanitary conditions.
- Crowded living conditions. High level of resident interaction, especially at mealtime and group activities.
- Rotating part-time staff that can introduce the virus to multiple facilities.

- Susceptibility of the resident population to illnesses.
- History of frequent influenza outbreaks in LTCFs.
- Difficulty in controlling or containing disease outbreaks within a facility.

Preventing the Flu

The best prevention method against the flu is vaccination. Getting a flu shot every year is recommended for residents, staff and anyone in close contact with residents of LTCF. Caregivers, visitors and even cleaning crews can spread influenza from resident to resident.

Other methods to help prevent the spread of influenza are:

1. Wash your hands often. This will help protect you from a variety of illnesses, including the flu.
2. Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze will help protect those around you from getting sick.
3. Avoid contact with others when you are sick. If possible, staff should stay home from work if they are sick. In addition, isolating or cohorting sick residents whenever possible will help prevent the spread of influenza.

Complications

Some of the complications caused by the flu include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

If residents or facility staff are in a group that is considered to be at high risk for complications from the flu and they get flu-like symptoms, they should consult with a health-care provider immediately.

Early warning signs of complications that need immediate attention can include:

- High or prolonged fever

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Near fainting or fainting
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Muscle ache

The flu vaccine can be given at the same time as other vaccines, including the pneumococcal vaccine.

Other Issues

Outbreaks. An outbreak of influenza in a LTCF can be a serious life-threatening situation. If an outbreak of influenza is suspected, notify your local county health department immediately.

Testing. Specimens can be submitted to the State Laboratories in Jacksonville and Tampa for testing to verify possible influenza outbreaks. The local county health department will work closely with the State Department of Health to determine testing needs.

Protective Measures. If isolation or cohorting of sick residents and or staff is not possible, it is recommended that those suspected of having respiratory illnesses be supplied with masks and tissues to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses to other patients.

Vaccine Timing. The best time to receive the flu vaccine is during October and November. However, getting immunized in December or later can still provide protection against the flu. Typically in adults, antibody protection against the flu will develop about two weeks after receiving the vaccination.

Staff Vaccination. It is highly recommended that all staff be vaccinated not only to prevent the spread of influenza to patients but also to prevent the spread of influenza from the facility to the community by exposing family and friends to the virus.