

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

INFLUENZA

What is Influenza?

Influenza, commonly referred to as the “flu,” is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza viruses. Influenza infections can cause mild to severe illness and the elderly, children, and those with weak immune systems are most at risk for complications due to the virus.

What are the signs and symptoms of an Influenza infection?

Symptoms of an influenza infection include sudden onset of fever and/or chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle/body aches, headache, fatigue (tiredness), and rarely vomiting and diarrhea.

How are Influenza infections spread?

Influenza is spread by respiratory droplets made when infected individuals cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can infect individuals up to 6 feet away when they get into a person’s mouth, nose, or lungs. It can also be spread by touching a surface contaminated by the virus and then touching their mouth or nose.

What is the incubation period of Influenza and how long is it contagious?

Symptoms will appear approximately 1-4 days after infection with the virus. Adults are contagious 1 day before symptoms start and up to 5-7 days after. Children can be contagious for longer than 7 days after symptoms start. Therefore infected persons are able to transmit the virus before they know they are sick.

What should I do if I think I have an Influenza infection?

Persons who have these symptoms should see their physicians. Children should remain at home and should not attend daycare or school for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of fever reducing medicines. Adults should also stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. Schools should report clusters of influenza-like illness to the Health Department.

How can I prevent myself and others from getting an Influenza infection?

The most important way to prevent infections with the influenza virus is to get a yearly flu vaccine, especially for those at high risk of complications. In addition, it is recommended to avoid close contact with sick people, cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, wash hands with soap and water, avoid touching of the eyes, nose, and mouth, staying home if you are sick unless to seek medical care, and to take antiviral drugs if prescribed by a doctor.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Orange County Epidemiology Program at 407-858-1420. You may also visit the Epidemiology Program website, <http://orchd.com/generalHealth/epidemiology/index.asp>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>, or the OCHD School Health website at <http://orchd.com/personalHealth/schoolHealth/index.asp> for additional information.

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