

Influenza (The Flu)

What is the flu?

- Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus that infects the nose, throat and lungs.
- There are usually two strains of influenza that circulate each year - type A and type B.
- The flu is different than a cold and usually comes on suddenly.
- Flu season typically lasts from October to May, with January and February being the most active.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever (usually over 101)
- Cough
- Runny nose and nasal congestion
- Headaches
- Muscle aches and pain
- Sore throat
- Abdominal pain and vomiting

There are usually no consequences from influenza. Some individuals, however, may develop secondary infections as a result of the illness, including ear infections and pneumonia

Emergency Warning Signs

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids, less than 1 wet diaper every 8 hours, or no tears when crying.
- Serious or constant vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms that improve, then return with fever and worse cough.

**If your child has any of the symptoms listed above, please seek immediate medical attention.

Treatment

- Treatment for the flu largely involves supportive care interventions, including:
 - Rest
 - Fluids
 - Tylenol/Motrin as needed for fever control and discomfort
- There are antiviral medications that may be used to treat the flu. These medications:
 - Can shorten the illness and make symptoms milder, as well as prevent serious complications.
 - Are recommended for individuals who are very sick or those who are at high risk for serious complications
 - Work best when started during the first 48 hours of illness.

How can I protect my child from the flu?

- The best way to protect against the flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine for yourself and your child.
 - The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.
 - Caregivers of children at high risk of flu complications should also get a flu vaccine
- Avoid individuals who are sick as much as possible.
- Remember to regularly cover your coughs and sneezes. Teach your children to do the same.
- Encourage frequent and proper hand washing and avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Regularly clean surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus.

When can my child return to school?

- Individuals can continue to spread the virus for up to 5-7 days after symptoms begin.
- Most schools require your child to be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning. Talk to you child's PCP to determine the best time to return.

