

How do I know if I have Influenza?

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after being infected. The symptoms of flu can include:

- fever
- dry cough
- muscle and joint pain
- tiredness or extreme exhaustion
- headache
- sore throat
- nasal congestion.

In the elderly, fever may be absent and the only signs of flu may be:

- confusion
- shortness of breath
- worsening of a chronic condition.

Children are more likely to have gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea).

What if my symptoms get worse?

Serious complications of flu occur in a small proportion of people who are infected and include pneumonia, inflammation of the heart muscle and neurologic complications, which can lead to hospitalisation and death. People at highest risk of complications from flu include those with underlying medical conditions. However, previously healthy people can also have severe complications.

Help and assistance

For more information:

- see your local doctor
- contact the nearest public health unit (www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/contact/public-health-units/default.asp)
- call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) (www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health/index.html) to get qualified health advice 24/7 for the cost of a local call.

If you are in an emergency situation, call 000.

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Townsville
Hospital
and Health
Service

Influenza

A guide for patients and visitors of the
Townsville Hospital and Health Service



Infection Prevention
and Control



Queensland
Government

What is Influenza?

Influenza or 'the flu' is a highly contagious disease caused by infection from influenza type A or B virus. These viruses infect the upper airways and lungs.

The flu can occur all year round but in temperate areas the influenza season typically occurs during the winter months. Flu is not the same as a common cold, and can be a serious illness. For some people, such as the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, the flu can cause serious complications which require hospitalisation. It can sometimes lead to death.

How does Influenza spread?

The flu can spread from person to person by:

- droplets spread from an infected person's coughs or sneezes touching surfaces contaminated by infected droplets (including hands, phones, keyboards and door handles) and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

People with flu can be infectious to others from 24 hours before symptoms start until a week after the start of symptoms. Even people with mild flu illness can transmit the infection.

What can I do to help?

You can reduce the risk of infection by getting vaccinated and practising good hand and respiratory hygiene to protect yourself and others:

- wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub
- wash your hands before touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- use a tissue or the inside of your arm when you cough and sneeze
- throw tissues away immediately and wash hands
- don't share items such as cigarettes, cups, lipstick, toys, or anything which has come into contact with the mouth or nose
- clean frequently touched surfaces regularly, such as door handles, taps, tables, benches, and fridge doors (flu viruses can be removed using household detergent)



Can I be vaccinated for Influenza?

Yes! Vaccination is required annually, as immunity from the vaccine decreases over time and the vaccine can change each year to cover the current virus strains. Vaccination usually takes up to two weeks to be effective.

What is the treatment for Influenza?

Generally, flu is managed by:

- resting in bed
- drinking plenty of fluids (particularly water)
- stay home from work while you have flu-like symptoms
- taking over-the-counter medication to help relieve symptoms (take as directed in the product information)
- Most people recover from the flu within a week, although a cough and tiredness may persist.