

Seasonal Influenza (Flu)

Infection Prevention and Control Fact Sheet for patients and carers



What is Influenza?

Influenza, more commonly known as flu, is an acute viral infection that spreads easily from person to person. There are two main types of flu, type A and type B and it can affect people of all ages.



What are the symptoms of flu?

Some people may only have mild symptoms while others may have more severe symptoms, especially if they have an underlying health condition e.g. Lung problems like asthma or problems with their immune system.

Common symptoms are:

- Fever and chills
- Cough, sore throat and runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches, joint pains, headache, fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea (more common in children than adults)



How is it spread?

Flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets which are produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. They can also be spread after touching surfaces that the infected droplets have landed on.

Adults with flu are infectious from the day before their symptoms start until 5-7 days later, while young children and people with weakened immune systems may be infectious for longer



How can I prevent other people from getting flu?

- ✓ Use disposable paper tissues when coughing or sneezing, to cover your nose and mouth and then put them in a waste bag straight afterwards.
- ✓ After coughing or sneezing, clean your hands with soap and water, hand wipes or the alcohol hand rub if hands are visibly clean.



What happens if you are diagnosed with flu while in hospital?

- ✓ We may move you to a single room to prevent the spread of flu to others.
- ✓ If you have a throat infection, it is really important that you cough or sneeze into disposable tissues, putting them in a waste bag straight after use. You must then wash your hands or use the alcohol hand rub if hands are visibly clean.
- ✓ Healthcare workers will wear a disposable yellow plastic apron, gloves and possibly a face mask when caring for you. They may also ask you to wear a face mask, to prevent the spread of flu to others if you are being moved to another ward/department.
- ✓ Healthcare workers will tell you when these precautions are no longer needed. Usually this is when your symptoms have settled for 24 hours and there is a clear improvement in your condition.



What about visitors? Are my friends and family at risk?

We would ask that you have no more than 1-2 visitors at a time. Visitors should not visit if they have any flu symptoms. If your visitors are helping with your care they need to speak to the nursing staff to find out if they need to wear disposable aprons, gloves and a mask.

For more information please speak to the nurse looking after you