

Basic Measures to Prevent the Risk of Influenza

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Stay informed about the situation by obtaining information from government sources in each country and heeding the instructions that the health authorities issue via the media.

How is the illness diagnosed? The sick person must see a doctor, who will conduct a thorough examination and ask for details of any other sick people, contacts or trips. The illness is diagnosed by identifying the virus in nasal or laryngeal secretions (viral isolation) during the first 24-72 hours of the onset of the illness, or by performing blood tests (to identify antibodies).

Can human influenza lead to complications? Yes, it can. If the influenza is not treated properly, or is accompanied by another, uncontrolled disease, it can lead to complications, especially respiratory illnesses (otitis, sinusitis, rhinitis, pneumonia, bronchopneumonia and obstructive laryngitis), cardiac problems or even death.

Recommendations for the workplace, educational centers, public services and trade

- Ensure that restrooms have plenty of soap and paper towels or electric hand dryers
- Place a hand washing sign where people will see it
- Issue internal bulletins to provide further information about how people should wash their hands and what they should do when they sneeze or cough
- Anyone who develops flu or respiratory symptoms should visit the nearest health care center or their company's medical officer

Recommendations for travelers

If you must travel

- Avoid crowds, make sure you wash your hands and be careful not to spread germs when you sneeze
- Inform the Health Unit if you were in a place affected by the outbreak, or visit your nearest health care center

If you return from an affected area

- Take your temperature three days after you return
- If you develop a fever, phone the nearest health care center
- Use a handkerchief or mask to protect your family and environment
- Report any contacts you had after entering the country
- Follow the recommendations issued by the country's health authorities

Personal measures:

- Do not greet people with a kiss or by shaking hands
- Do not share food, glasses or silverware

- Ventilate and allow sunlight to enter your home, office and all enclosed areas
- Keep kitchen and bathroom surfaces and utensils clean, as well as toys, telephones and other objects used by different people.
- If you suddenly develop a high fever, cough, headache or aching muscles and joints, visit your doctor or health unit at once
- Wrap up and avoid sudden changes of temperature
- Avoid exposure to environmental pollutants
- Do not smoke in enclosed areas or near children, the elderly or the sick
- Visit your doctor immediately if you develop symptoms
- Wash your hands at every opportunity:
 - Before and after eating, tending to a sick person or changing diapers
 - After touching objects such as fixed line phones, cellular phones, supermarket carts and computers, and after a bus ride
 - On arriving home
 - After coughing or sneezing
- For it to be effective, you should wash your hands for 40-60 seconds, the same time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday."
- Use a tissue or toilet paper to cover your face when you sneeze or cough. If you use a handkerchief, do not share it, change it every day and wash it immediately after use to avoid spreading germs. If you do not have a handkerchief, use your forearm.
- Do not visit sick people or people with cold or flu symptoms.
- **If you have a cold or the flu**, avoid shaking hands with, kissing and visiting people. Do not touch your eyes or mouth. Do not smoke. **People who are ill** should stay at home and not go to public places where people congregate, such as churches, cinemas, stadiums and shopping centers.
- The symptoms of this illness are a fever (temperature of over 38 degrees), coughing and a sore throat. In you develop these symptoms, visit or call the nearest health care facility.
- Surfaces that could become contaminated with respiratory secretions should be cleaned frequently.

Recommendations on how to nurse people at home

- Keep the sick person isolated (in a separate room). Ensure the room is well ventilated.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after tending to the sick person
- When tending to the sick person, cover your nose and mouth, preferably with a mask, and then dispose of the mask properly
- Thoroughly wash and disinfect or boil all eating implements and personal items. Ideally, you should use disposable implements and throw them away immediately. Wear gloves when handling them.
- Do not permit people with low defenses, children, the elderly and pregnant women to come into contact with the sick person.
- Avoid contact with the patient's fluids. In case of accidental contact, wash yourself immediately with soap and water.
- If possible, the sick person should be assigned a specific bathroom to use. If not, disinfect the bathroom every time he/she uses it.

- Get enough rest
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Refrain from smoking
- Avoid taking aspirin (acetyl salicylic acid), because of the risk of the complications associated with the medicine. This applies especially to minors aged 2-16.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in the trash to avoid transmitting the virus to others.

IICA Health Unit