



Reduce The Risk of Influenza - Protect Yourself and Others

Influenza is caused by viruses that spread easily from person to person. A few simple precautions can help reduce the risk of influenza and safeguard everyone's health. This will be especially important during the next pandemic.

1. **Wash your hands often.** Teach your children to do this. Wash your hands with soap and water (for 20 seconds) especially after you cough, sneeze, or blow your nose. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based (60% or more) disposable hand-wipes or gel sanitizers. Hand washing/sanitizing is one of the most important methods to prevent the spread of influenza (pandemic influenza).
2. **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue away immediately.** Teach your children to do this. This may prevent those around you from getting sick. If tissues are not available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hand.
3. **Get the flu shot every year.** This is the best protection for seasonal influenza.
4. **Avoid close contact with people who are sick, coughing or sneezing.** If you are sick, keep your distance (at least 2 meters/6 feet) from others to protect them from getting sick.
5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** You can become ill by touching a surface contaminated with germs and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
6. **Clean surfaces that could transfer germs.** The influenza virus can live up to 5 minutes on hands, 8-12 hours on soft surfaces, and up to 2 days on hard surfaces. Some additional cleaning measures should be taken if there is someone in your household with suspected or confirmed influenza. Environmental surfaces (eg. bathroom counters) and objects (eg. doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, telephones, computer keyboards, toys) that have been touched by a sick person should be cleaned every day with your regular household cleaning agent.
7. **Stay home when you are sick or have influenza symptoms.** Adults can transmit the influenza virus for up to 3-5 days after the start of symptoms; this period can last for 7 days or more in children. Get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed.
8. **Practice good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods. Avoid smoking as it may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.