

Influenza

Influenza or the "Flu" is an infectious disease of the respiratory tract. It is usually caused by either the Influenza A or Influenza B virus, with influenza A being the more serious and more likely to cause death.

The most common and life threatening complication of influenza is Secondary Bacterial Pneumonia.

The incubation period, or time from exposure to occurrence of symptoms, is 18 to 72 hours. Most people ill with the "flu" are ill 6 to 10 days and may not feel completely well for several weeks.

Infection with the virus occurs when people with acute infections spread the virus to other people by talking, coughing or sneezing and produce tiny droplets that carry the virus through the air that are then inhaled by others.

High risk for people with the following:

- **Chronic Respiratory or Cardiac disease**
- **Diabetes**
- **Chronic Renal disease**
- **The Elderly**
- **The very young**
- **People with depressed immune systems**

Possible symptoms can include:

- **Widespread muscular aches and pains**
- **Headache**
- **Loss of energy**
- **A blocked nose or nasal discharge**
- **Watery eyes (that are often sore)**
- **Sore throat**
- **A high temperature (which remains high for an average of three days)**
- **Shivering**

The difference between a common cold and influenza is that influenza is marked by muscular aches and pains as well as a sudden onset. Often, you're sick before you realize it.

Some people are afraid to have the influenza vaccine because they are sure it will give them the "flu". Influenza vaccines produced in the US have never been capable of causing influenza because it is not made from a live vaccine. It is created by using dead influenza viruses that cannot cause infection. The vaccine causes no side effects in most people. The most serious side effect that can occur is an allergic reaction to the vaccine found in people who have a severe allergy to eggs. This is because the viruses used in the vaccine are grown in chicken eggs.

Health Tips

Antibiotics are not effective against flu viruses, however the drugs amantadine and rimantadine can be used if taken within 48 hours of the onset of illness. These drugs can reduce the duration of fever and other symptoms. Rimantadine has fewer reported side effects than amantadine.

Source: Center for Disease Control

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.

Copyright © Claiborne County Hospital, 1999-2000