



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Influenza

(Flu)

What is the Flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

How do you get it?

The flu spreads from person to person in droplets from coughing or sneezing. It may also be spread by touching something with virus on it and then touching your mouth or nose.

What are the symptoms of flu?

The flu starts suddenly and may include fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, diarrhea and vomiting.

Complications of the flu include pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical problems, such as heart problems, asthma or diabetes.

When do symptoms start?

Flu symptoms usually begin 1 to 4 days after exposure to the virus.

For how long is a person with the flu contagious?

You may be able to infect others one day before symptoms begin, and up to 7 days after getting sick. So it is possible to spread the flu before you know you are sick.

What is the treatment for the flu?

Your doctor can prescribe medicines to treat severe cases of flu, or cases with high risk of complications.

Most cases of the flu can be treated with plenty of rest and drinking lots of liquids.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil) can be given for fever and pain. Aspirin should never be given to children or teenagers with flu-like symptoms.

Should a person with the flu stay away from work or school?

Yes. Because flu is very contagious, it is important to stay away from others until you are feeling better.

How can you keep from getting the flu?

The best way to prevent flu is for people to get a flu shot each fall. People at high risk for complications of flu are especially encouraged to get a yearly vaccine.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, stay away from others to protect them from getting sick also.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you cannot use soap and water, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent the spread of the virus.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>