

Flu (Influenza)



Feb. 2015

Communicable Disease Division
3629 South D Street, Tacoma, WA 98418
(253) 798-6410 (phone) • (253) 798-7666 (fax)

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have been exposed to influenza (“the flu”). Influenza is a highly contagious, respiratory disease caused by an influenza virus. Influenza season most commonly starts in December and January and peaks in February and March.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Symptoms of influenza begin suddenly and include fever, headache, chills, body/muscle aches, extreme tiredness, dry cough, and sore throat. Young children may also have nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Nausea and vomiting alone, often reported as the “stomach flu”, are often caused by other factors and are not influenza.

How is influenza spread?

Influenza is easily spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing or sneezing. Surfaces and hands contaminated with nose, mouth, or throat secretions can also spread influenza viruses. An infected person may spread influenza one day before having symptoms up to seven days after becoming ill.

How is influenza treated?

Antiviral medications are available by prescription that may reduce the length of illness; consult your health care provider. Measures may be taken to help relieve the symptoms, which may include getting enough rest, drinking plenty of fluids and avoiding tobacco and alcohol. Over-the-counter medications, when used as directed, may lessen fever, headache, and muscles aches.

How do you control the spread?

Annual flu vaccines are recommended for all persons 6 months and older, unless you have contraindication to the vaccine. Make sure adults and children wash hands frequently and thoroughly. Use plenty of plain liquid soap and warm water. Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing. When using a tissue, dispose into proper wastebasket and wash hands well afterwards. Avoid touching the eyes, mouth, or nose. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently. Stay home during the first days of illness when symptoms are most severe and the infection is most contagious. Staff and children should remain home until they have been fever free for at least 24 hours.

How do I get more information?

For more information about influenza (“the flu”), contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press “0”.