

Influenza – Patient Information

Engelska

General

Influenza is the most common viral disease in Sweden during the winter months. Ordinary flu is also called seasonal flu.

Since the virus is highly contagious and changes from one year to the next, it is difficult to contain its spread. You may already be infectious to others one day before your symptoms appear. The virus is transmitted through the air and spreads when someone who is ill with the flu coughs, sneezes or breathes out. The risk of infection is greater indoors than outdoors, since the infectious agent dissipates more rapidly in open air. Influenza can also be spread through contact with hands, objects or equipment. For example, it is common to become infected on buses, in schools and at work.

Influenza usually goes away by itself after five to seven days, but may sometimes lead to secondary infections such as sinusitis or pneumonia. If you belong to a risk group, for example age greater than 65 or have heart or lung problems, the risk of secondary infection is higher, in which case a flu shot is recommended annually.

Symptoms

When you come down with the flu, it is common for you to experience sudden high fever, headache, muscle aches, sore throat, eye pain, cough and irritated red eyes. Poor appetite and dehydration are common. You may feel tired for a couple of weeks after the infection.

Treatment

Because influenza is caused by a virus, antibiotics do not help. To alleviate the symptoms you should rest, drink plenty of fluids, lie down with your head in an elevated position, take non-prescription pain relievers and medicine to lower your fever. You can also use a decongestant nasal spray.

Antiviral drugs may shorten the time of your illness by about one day. If you belong to a risk group, you may need treatment with antiviral medications, but no treatment is needed for otherwise healthy individuals.

How to avoid becoming infected:

- Wash your hands frequently and carefully using soap and water. Dry your hands on your own towel.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with other people and those whom you know are ill.

How to avoid infecting others:

- Wash your hands frequently and carefully, especially if you are coughing and sneezing.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or into a tissue that you throw away in a wastebasket.
- Stay home from work or school as long as you have a fever.

You do not usually need to see a doctor

Usually, the flu causes you to have a high fever and to feel ill. This is why you need to rest and stay home from work or school for about one week. After this period of time, the worst symptoms of the illness have usually gone away, but it is common to feel tired for several weeks.

It is important to listen to your body and to avoid strenuous activity. You need rest, but that does not mean that you always need to lie in bed. Usually it is good if you are up and about now and then. Spending time outdoors and getting some fresh air is good for the mucous membranes in your airways.

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Measures taken by hospitals/assisted living facilities

You will be isolated/stay in a room by yourself as long you have influenza symptoms and for a couple of days after they have stopped. During this time, food will be served in your room.

Wash your hands frequently and carefully, especially if you are coughing and sneezing. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or into a tissue that you throw away in a wastebasket. Avoid having visitors if possible. If you have visitors, they should be careful to practice good hand hygiene before and after the visit. They will only be permitted to visit your room and not the rest of the ward.

Ring 1177 for health care advice in English/Swedish or visit www.1177.se/Halland/other-languages