



PEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE UNLIMITED

Influenza

DEFINITION

Influenza is a viral infection of the nose, throat, trachea and bronchi (large air passages) that occurs yearly. There are three types of influenza viruses: Type A, Type B and Type C. Type A virus is the one that is constantly creating new strains. Therefore, it is not unusual for an individual to get influenza yearly. In order to combat these new strains of Type A Influenza new vaccines must be developed for the virus every year.

SYMPTOMS:

- Sudden onset of fever
- Chills
- Abdominal Pain
- Malaise
- Muscle Aches
- Dry Cough
- Fatigue and weakness
- Sore Throat
- Nasal Congestion
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting

HOW CAN YOU GET THE FLU?

- It is primarily spread between persons indoors and in group gatherings.
- Spread from person to person through direct contact or by articles contaminated with drainage from the mouth or nose.
- People are infectious 24 hours before and for an average of 7 days after onset of symptoms.
- Symptoms may last as little as one day or for as long as one week.
- Usual outbreaks occur from December to March.

TREATMENT OF FLU SYMPTOMS:

Treatment is aimed at relief of the symptoms of influenza

1. Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Water is not considered a fluid that provides nourishment. Suggested fluids for children under 8 months are: Pedialyte, Ricelyte or juice if no diarrhea is present. For children over 8 months we recommend Gatorade (any flavor), flat soda (no diet), jello water and popsicles.

2. Control fever with acetaminophen or ibuprofen every 4-6 hours. This will also be helpful for general aches associated with the flu.

3. Do not give aspirin or aspirin products to children with influenza because of the increased risk of Reye's syndrome, a disease that affects all body organs, which can be fatal.

If flu symptoms persists or are untreated, secondary bacterial infections may develop. If your child complains of difficulty breathing, sinus pain, earaches, has a prolonged fever or a temperature of 103° contact your pediatrician.

PREVENTION:

The best means of prevention is avoiding the spread of secretions. Family members with a cold should carefully dispose of tissues; not share towels, glasses or eating utensils; cover their mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing. The most common carrier of infection is the human hand, which deposits viruses on doorknobs, faucets and other everyday objects. Therefore, frequent handwashing helps decrease the spread of the virus.

VACCINE:

Please refer to Influenza Vaccine Sheets.