

Discharge Instructions

INFLUENZA

[Adult]

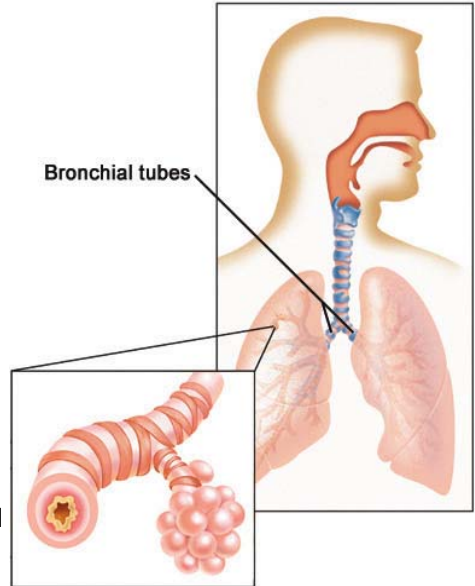
Influenza, also called "the flu", is a viral illness that affects the air passages of the lungs. It differs from the common cold. It is highly contagious. It may be spread through the air by coughing and sneezing or by direct contact (touching the sick person and then touching your own eyes, nose or mouth).

Illness starts 1-3 days after exposure and lasts for 1-2 weeks. Antibiotics are usually not needed unless a complication appears (ear or sinus infection, or pneumonia).

Symptoms may be mild or severe and can include extreme tiredness (wanting to stay in bed all day), chills, fevers, muscle aching, soreness with eye movement, headache and a dry hacking cough.

HOME CARE:

- 1) If symptoms are severe, rest at home for the first 2-3 days. Don't let yourself become overly tired when returning to your activities.
- 2) Avoid exposure to cigarette smoke (yours or others).
- 3) Tylenol or ibuprofen (Advil) will help fever, muscle aching and headache. To avoid risk of liver injury, aspirin should not be used in children and teenagers under 18 with this illness.
- 4) Nausea and loss of appetite are common. A light diet is recommended. Avoid dehydration by drinking 6-8 glasses of fluids per day (water, sport drinks like Gatorade, soft drinks without caffeine, juices, tea, soup, etc.). Extra fluids will also help loosen secretions in the nose and lungs.
- 5) Over-the-counter cold medicines will not shorten the duration of the illness but may be helpful for the following symptoms: cough (Robitussin DM); sore throat (Chloraseptic lozenges or spray); nasal and sinus congestion (Actifed or Sudafed). [NOTE: Do not use decongestants if you have high blood pressure.]



FOLLOW UP with your doctor or as directed by our staff if you are not improving over the next week.

NOTE: If you are age 65 or older, or if you have chronic asthma or COPD, we recommend a PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINATION every five years and a yearly INFLUENZA VACCINATION (FLU-SHOT) every autumn. Ask your doctor about this.

RETURN PROMPTLY or contact your doctor if any of the following occur:

- Cough with lots of colored sputum (mucus) or blood in your sputum
- Chest pain, shortness of breath, wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Severe headache, face, neck or ear pain
- New rash
- Fever over 101.5° F (38.6 C) for more than three days
- Confusion, behavior change or seizure
- Severe weakness or dizziness