



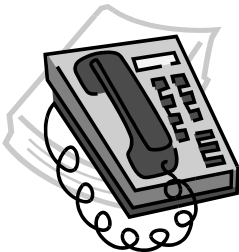
Orange County Fire Authority

www.ocfa.org

Flu Season Tips



Every time you cough, you send germs into the air at speeds faster than 100mph.



Influenza virus can survive on surfaces for several hours! Wash your hands frequently!

The Orange County Fire Authority wants you and your loved ones to stay safe and healthy this winter. Here is some helpful information and tips to protect yourself and your family from influenza, “the flu”.

Prevention

Influenza is caused by a virus that spreads person-to-person. The virus is easily transmitted through respiratory droplets by coughing or sneezing from infected persons. Influenza virus can survive on surfaces like phones or countertops for up to several hours.

- Wash your hands often! This is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the disease. Use hand sanitizer when hand washing is not possible.
- Always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, preferably with a tissue or your arm.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, or eyes with unwashed hands.
- Dispose of tissues in a bag or lined wastebasket.
- Wipe common area surfaces with disinfectant wipes when possible. Telephones, handrails, doorknobs, and keyboards are notorious receptacles for germs.
- If you are sick, stay home! Encourage others to do the same!

Do I have the flu?

We often use the term “the flu” to describe cold symptoms and other types of illnesses. In fact, there is a specific description of signs and symptoms that defines true **influenza**. These symptoms include:

- Abrupt onset of fever. Fever is a big part of the disease; in fact, if there is no fever then it is **not** the flu!
- Upper airway symptoms like a sore throat and cough.
- Chills and fatigue are very common as well.
- Headache, muscle aches, and joint pains accompany the other symptoms.
- In **children**, look for fever, vomiting, and abdominal pain.
- **Infants** may show fever, inconsolability, pale & “blotchy” looking skin, poor feeding, weak crying, and decreased “inter-activeness”. These are very serious signs in a baby!

Who is at high risk?

In general, healthy adults can get through a bout of the flu with few problems. There are certain groups that are at an **increased risk for complications** when suffering with influenza. These groups include:



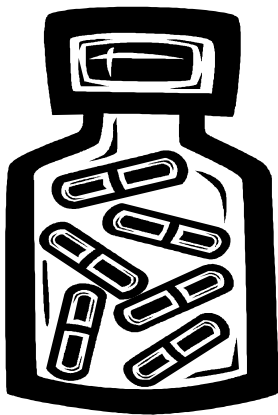
- Seniors and nursing home residents
- Cancer and chemotherapy patients
- Persons who have had organ transplants
- Diabetics and others with chronic medical conditions
- Young infants and pregnant women
- Patients with weak immune systems

What if I do get the flu?

Stay at home and rest! Avoid spreading the disease to others who may be at high risk. If you are in the high risk category, consult your private doctor for treatment. Healthy adults can control the symptoms of the flu with over the counter medications like Tylenol. Here are a few more suggestions:

- Drink lots of liquids! Water and juice are fine. Don't forget the chicken soup! Avoid becoming dehydrated from fever and lack of appetite.
- Rest as much as possible and when you are feeling better avoid "overdoing it" in the beginning. This can lead to a relapse.
- Control your fever. **Remember that you NEVER give aspirin to children.** Aspirin may cause a very serious complication known as "Reyes Syndrome" in children with the flu. This can be fatal.
- In the first 48 hours of flu symptoms you can consult your doctor about anti-viral medications that may reduce the symptoms or the duration of the illness.
- Chest pains and shortness of breath are **NOT** flu related symptoms. Call 911 immediately if these symptoms arise.

Antibiotics are not effective in treating viral infections like colds and flu. Overuse of antibiotics can cause bacteria to become resistant to treatment!



When should I call my doctor?

Anytime you have health-related questions your doctor is the expert on your health and he or she should be your primary resource. Here are a few suggestions related to the flu:

- Call your doctor at the first sign of the flu if you in the high risk group
- Call your doctor if you are unable to take your prescribed medications
- Call your doctor if you develop a rash with a fever

When should I call 911?

- **Dial 911** if you experience chest or abdominal pain or pressure, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, sudden dizziness or confusion, or severe or persistent vomiting.
- **Dial 911** if severe flu symptoms appear in an infant or a young child.

If started within 48 hours of flu symptoms, antiviral medications can be effective at reducing the severity and shortening the duration of the illness.