# Influenza

A virus causes influenza (flu). It can be mild or severe enough to cause death.

People with HIV have a higher risk of getting flu. They are also more likely to have problems like pneumonia.

## Signs

The signs of the flu are much like those of a cold. Unlike a cold, flu can cause a fever and muscle aches. Other signs are:

- Dry cough
- Feel very tired
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat

Upset stomach, throwing up and loose stool may occur. These are seen more often in children.

## Causes

Flu viruses spread from person to another when they cough or sneeze.

You can catch the flu when you touch something that has flu viruses on it and then touch your mouth or nose.

A person can infect others 24 hours before signs appear and up to five days after signs start.

## How to Prevent Influenza

The best way to prevent the flu is with a flu shot. All people older than six months should get a flu shot every fall.

A flu shot is recommended even if you have advanced HIV or a weak immune system.

There are two types of vaccines:

- The flu shot. This is made from dead flu viruses. The body begins to fight them anyway. It is then prepared to kill the live virus. The flu shot cannot give you the flu.
- A nose spray vaccine. This is made with live, weak flu viruses. People with HIV should not take a vaccine made from live viruses. This is only for healthy people aged two to 49 who are not pregnant.

People with HIV should not get a flu shot if ***they have***:

- A severe allergy to hens' eggs, or
- Guillain-Barre Syndrome within six weeks after a flu shot in the past

Anyone who has a fever should wait until all symptoms are gone. If you have any questions, talk to your doctor before you get a flu shot.

**Prevention**

- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Wash your hands often
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth
- Get plenty of sleep
- Stay active
- Try to avoid stress, or handle it in healthy ways
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat healthy food

© 2019 PHP CA Form 226.1

## How to Know You Have Influenza

A doctor can tell if you have the flu by the signs listed above or by a nose swab test.

## Influenza Treatment

There is no cure for the flu. Any treatment is to help the symptoms and shorten the amount of time you have the illness.

You should rest and drink lots of liquids. Stay away from other people as much as you can.

If you are on some HIV meds, be careful about the use of Tylenol® (acetaminophen) for aches and pains. Many meds already have acetaminophen. It is easy to take too much. This can cause liver damage.

It is not known how some meds that fight the flu mix with HIV meds. If you take medications for mental health or kidney problems, you should know that these may not mix well with meds that fight the flu. Talk to your doctor about your prescriptions.

**For more information**
Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call PHP Nurse Advice Line at: (800) 797-1717.

© 2019 PHP CA Form 226.1