

INFLUENZA (FLU) FACT SHEET

The disease

Influenza is a contagious disease that usually occurs in epidemics and is caused by a specific group of viruses. It usually gives fever, cough, headache, muscle aches, and weakness out of proportion to what one would expect with a common cold.

Mode of transmission

The disease is transmitted by nose and mouth secretions, ie sneezing, coughing, poor hand washing.

Usual pattern of infection

Symptoms usually appear one to three days after exposure. There is usually a sudden onset of *headache*, *fever* (in the range of 100⁰-103⁰), *muscle aches* (usually in the legs and lower back but sometimes affecting the abdominal muscles), and *cough*. Stomach and intestinal symptoms are **not** common. Recovery is usually complete in one to two weeks.

Complications

Complications are not common, but may include ear infection, sinus infection, bronchitis, exacerbation of underlying asthma, or pneumonia. If you suspect you may have a complication, for example, a temperature over 100⁰ past the third day of the flu, or a productive cough not starting to improve by one week, you should come to the University Health Service and be examined, or call for advice.

Treatment

Take good care of yourself! Rest and liquids are important. If started within 48 hours or the onset of symptoms, Oseltamivir or Zanamivir, two prescription antiviral agents active against the influenza viruses, may be beneficial. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) taken per package directions, may help provide relief from fever and muscle aches. If your cough is severe and keeps you from resting, the University Health Service may prescribe a cough medicine. **Gradual** return to full activity is advised. NOTE: Antibiotics do not affect the course of uncomplicated influenza nor is there any evidence that they prevent complications.

Individuals with chronic health problems should speak with their clinician about the benefits of the influenza vaccine that is usually administered each fall.

Check our website: www.uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call **510-642-2000**

Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice