



COMMON COLD & INFLUENZA

Common colds are mild infections of the nose and throat, which are very common in young children (and in adults who are around them), and are caused by many different viruses. Usually the viral illness causes some combination of stuffy nose, runny nose, sore throat, cough, runny eyes, ear fluid and fever.

Influenza (the flu) is also caused by a virus (e.g., influenza-A, influenza-B) and causes symptoms of fever, headache, sore throat, cough, muscle ache and fatigue. Most people with influenza feel too ill to attend childcare.

Occasionally, the common cold or influenza can be complicated by a bacterial infection such as an ear infection, sinus infections, or pneumonia. These complications can be treated with appropriate antibiotics after evaluation by their health care provider.

Who gets these diseases?

Anyone can. Young children may be sick with these illnesses several times per year. As the number of persons in contact with a child increases, so does the likelihood of exposure to the common viruses that cause the cold and flu.

How are they spread?

The viruses can be transmitted from one person to another in respiratory secretions (i.e., saliva, nasal discharge, and phlegm). Infected droplets may be scattered through sneezing or coughing or they may land on surfaces touched by other persons, who then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms of a **common cold** appear as soon as 12-72 hours after exposure. The symptoms of **influenza** appear in 1-4 days after exposure, and typically last 2-3 days.

What is the treatment?

While there is medication available, most health care providers suggest rest and plenty of fluids. To see if there is bacterial infection in addition to the viral infection, a healthcare provider should evaluate a child who has a high fever, persistent cough, or earache. Because of a possible association with Reye's Syndrome (i.e., vomiting, liver problems and coma), salicylate-containing products (i.e., aspirin) are not recommended for control of fever.

How can the spread of these diseases be prevented?

Influenza vaccine is the primary method of preventing influenza and its severe complications. The vaccine should be given annually beginning at 6 months of age. Two doses should be given the first year the child receives the influenza vaccine.

Annual influenza vaccination is *recommended* for all children aged 6 months through age 18 with priority given to the following persons for influenza vaccine if influenza vaccine supplies are limited:

- Children 6 months to 18 years
- Pregnant women
- Persons aged 50 years old and older
- Persons of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- Persons who live with or care for persons at high risk

Additional ways to prevent the spread of these diseases:

- Get adequate rest, good nutrition, plenty of fluids
- Avoid people who are sick
- Observe children for symptoms of coughing, sneezing, headache, fatigue, fever. Notify parent to pick child up
- Remind children if they sneeze or cough into their hand or tissue, they must properly dispose of the tissue and wash their hands

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- Runny noses and eyes should be promptly wiped, then wash their hands
- Disposable tissues should be used. Keep tissues available
- Toys that children put in their mouths and frequently used surfaces (e.g., tables) should be washed and disinfected at least once each day
- The childcare facility should have fresh air and be aired out completely once a day, even in the winter months

Who should be excluded?

Children should be excluded if they have a fever or are unable to participate in general activities. Exclusion is of little benefit since viruses are likely to spread.

Reportable?

No. Influenza is not reportable, but please notify the Division of Public Health Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at (603) 271-4496 of influenza outbreaks. The common cold is not reportable.