



4 August 2015

## Information about influenza (Flu) in the region

Influenza is affecting schools and early childhood centres in the region. The main symptoms are, the sudden onset of a sore throat, headache, fever, cough and sometimes, vomiting and tummy pain in younger children. The following steps will help stop other children and families from getting sick:

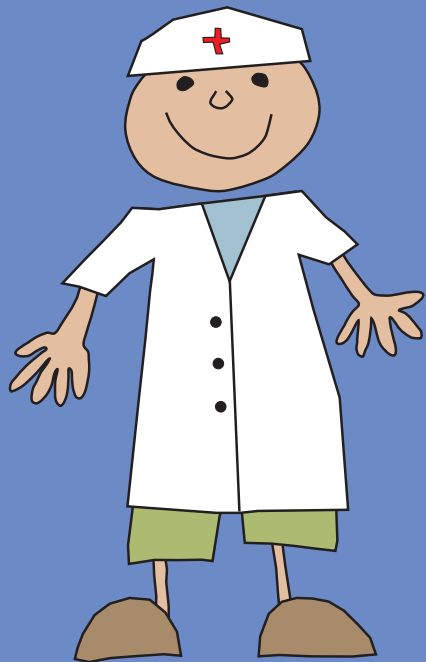
- 1. Children or staff who are unwell should not be at school/childcare/work or attend social functions and sports matches.** When calling your school or centre to say your child is away sick please let them know if they have flu like symptoms. People can still be infectious even when symptoms have improved, so ensure you stay home until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped and the child/adult is well enough to return.

**If you are worried about your own or another person's symptoms or have an underlying health condition that makes you vulnerable to severe illness, you should call the Healthline on 0800 611 116 or your GP for further advice.**

- 2. Prevent the spread of illness** by ensuring everyone covers their mouth and nose with tissues when coughing and sneezing. Put used tissues in a covered bin or a plastic bag. If there are no tissues available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve – not your hands. Remember to wash your hands afterwards.
- 3. Encourage everyone to wash their hands regularly.** Clean hands are really important in preventing the spread of winter viruses. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water and dry them for 20 seconds with a dry towel or paper towel. You can use an alcohol-based hand gel on clean hands, but dirty hands must be washed with soap and water first. It is very important that small children are supervised by an adult when using hand gel to make sure they do not accidentally get it in their eyes or swallow it. Alcohol hand gel should be stored safely when not in use. Hands should be washed before preparing food and eating, and after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, or using the toilet. Posters can be downloaded from our website [www.rph.org.nz](http://www.rph.org.nz) (Resources > Influenza)
- 4. Clean surfaces that are touched a lot (door handles, bench tops, toilet and bathroom areas).** Viruses can live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces. One of the most effective and cheapest disinfecting solutions to clean these surfaces is a solution of household bleach and water. Further information is available on our website [www.rph.org.nz](http://www.rph.org.nz) (Public Health Topics > Early Childhood > Keeping your centre healthy)
- 5. Influenza immunisation.** If your school or centre has not yet seen an increase in absenteeism from flu like symptoms there is still time for staff and children to get immunised by their family doctor. This is very important for children or staff who have underlying health conditions that may make them more susceptible to becoming very sick. The immunisation is free for people with certain health conditions. It takes up to 10-14 days from the time of vaccination to develop full immunity and if somebody has already been exposed to the flu virus before immunity develops, the vaccine will not prevent infection.

# GENERAL INFORMATION FOR INFLUENZA

For most people with influenza, home is the best place to rest and recover.



This information will help you care for someone with influenza, tell you when to get extra help and help stop others getting sick.

**IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, RING 111**

## FLU SYMPTOMS

the flu and colds have similar symptoms

Symptoms for the cold and flu are similar.

You are more likely to have the **flu** if you have:

- a severe fever (over 38°C) lasting several days;
- a cough and sore chest; and
- severe exhaustion and aches and pains.

You are more likely to have the **cold** if you have:

- a blocked nose;
- a lot of sneezing; and
- a sore throat.



Make sure the sick person comes into contact with as few people as possible, including contact between the sick person and others living in the house.

## GIVING CARE

how to care for someone with influenza

A person with the flu needs a few key things to help them recover:

Plenty of fluids to drink: water and juice are best.

Do not give tea or coffee.

**NO ALCOHOL.**

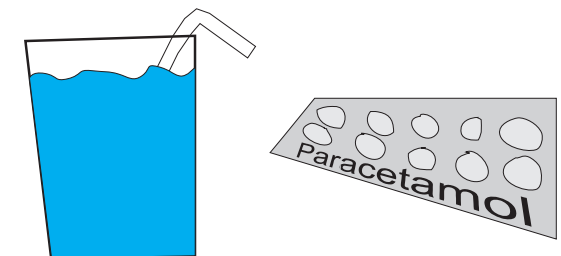
Use paracetamol for pain and fever, make sure you check and follow the dose limits on the packet.

Do **NOT** give aspirin to children or teenagers who have the flu or flu-like sickness – it can cause serious illness.

Light clothing and blankets, and cool flannels can help with fever.

Lots of rest is important. The flu is a serious illness and may make you feel weak.

Make sure you dispose of your tissues safely.



## GETTING HELP

what to do if someone gets much worse

If the person you are looking after has any of these symptoms, call your family doctor for advice:

Suddenly feeling much worse.

Very high temperature (over 40°C or 104°F) that won't come down with paracetamol.

Pain in the chest.

Trouble breathing.

Bluish colour around the lips and cheeks.

Fainting.

Confusion - trouble talking in complete sentences.

Persistent vomiting or diarrhoea.

Develop a rash.

**IF THE PERSON STOPS BREATHING, BECOMES UNCONSCIOUS OR HAS SEIZURES (FITS), CALL 111.**

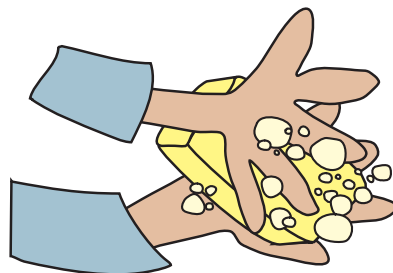
## STAYING WELL

how to protect yourself and others in your house

When caring for the person with the flu, try and keep your face at least a metre (3 feet) away, especially if he or she is coughing or sneezing.

The single most important thing to remember is to **KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN.**

Wash your hands with hot water and soap, remember to dry your hands well.



Remember to wash and dry your hands very thoroughly:

- After being around or touching the person with influenza.
- After handling clothes, linen, towels or items handled by the sick person.
- After using the toilet.
- Before eating, smoking or preparing food.

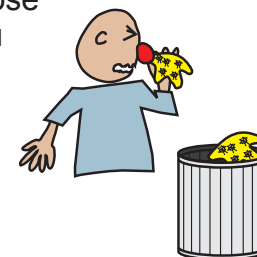
## KEEPING CLEAN

cleaning to stop the spread of influenza

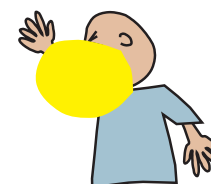
**Influenza** is a highly contagious respiratory virus.

**It spreads** through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes or by touching their hands.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze



and then throw the tissue away



**OR**

cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

You need to make sure that you take more care with household hygiene.

Clean surfaces touched by the person with the flu (phones, remote controls etc).

Do not share cutlery, cups or plates with the person with the flu.

Do NOT shake out dirty clothes, linen or towels used by the person with flu.

Any waste, like tissues, that might be infectious should be placed with normal rubbish for collection.