

**DEFINITION**

Influenza (flu) is a viral infection of the nose, throat, trachea and bronchi. The main symptoms are a stuffy nose, sore throat and a bad cough. There may be more muscle pain, headache, fever and chills than with usual colds. The fever may last for 4-5 days, the runny nose 5-10 days and the cough 2-3 weeks.

**HOME CARE ADVICE**

Treatment of influenza depends on the child's main symptoms.

**1. For a Runny Nose with Profuse Discharge, Blow or Suction the Nose.**

Remember that nasal mucus and discharge are the body's way of washing viruses and bacteria out of the nose and sinuses. Blowing the nose is all that is needed. For younger babies, use a soft rubber suction bulb to remove the secretions gently. You can also apply petroleum jelly or Aquaphor to the nasal openings to protect them from irritation (cleanse the skin first).

**2. For a Blocked Nose, Use Nasal Washes.**

This is especially important as a young infant cannot nurse or drink from a bottle unless the nose is open. Warm water or saline nose drops followed by rubber bulb suction will open most blocked noses. Repeat until clear.

Most stuffy noses are blocked by dried mucus. Suction alone or blowing the nose cannot remove it. Neither can medicines. Saline nasal drops are made by adding ½ teaspoon of salt to 1 cup (8 oz) of warm water. Make a fresh amount daily. If the air in your home is dry, use a cool mist humidifier.

For the older child who can blow his nose: Use three to four drops as necessary in each nostril while your child is lying on his back on a bed. You will want his head to hang over the side, or you may prop a pillow under his shoulders so that there is a bit of extension at the neck. Wait for 1 minute to allow the saline drops to soften and loosen the dried mucus. Then have your child blow his nose. This can be repeated several times in a row before complete clearing of the nasal passage.

**3. Fever or Aches.**

For fever > 102 or aches, use acetaminophen every 4 to 6 hours or ibuprofen every 6 to 8 hours. Aspirin should be avoided in children and adolescents with suspected influenza or any viral illness because of the possible link with Reye's Syndrome.

**4. Cough or Hoarseness.**

Give your child cough drops if over 4 years old.

**5. Sore Throat.**

A soft diet will help. For mild sore throat, give warm chicken broth over age 1 year, and warm herbal tea (chamomile) with lemon and honey for children over 4 years.

**6. Contagiousness.**

Spread is rapid because the incubation period is 24-36 hours, and the virus is very contagious.

**VACCINATION AND PREVENTION**

Influenza vaccine gives protection for only about 1 year. In our office, we administer the **Inactivated Influenza vaccine**. This is recommended annually for the following groups:

- 1 .All children 6 mo – 5 yrs of age.
- 2 .Household contacts and out-of-home caretakers in day/homecare.
3. People with long-term health problems. Examples: asthma, heart disease, kidney disease, metabolic disease (diabetes), anemia and other blood disorders.
4. People with a weakened immune system. Examples: HIV/AIDS or any other disease affecting the immune system, long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids, cancer treatment with X-rays or drugs.

**CALL OUR OFFICE 972-608-0774****Immediately if**

- Your child is having difficulty with breathing.
- Your child starts to act very sick

**During regular hours if**

- An earache or sinus pain occurs.
- A fever lasts over 3 days, or returns after going away for 24 hours

- Yellow/Green nasal discharge for >10 days