

# PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

## PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

### *What is Pandemic flu?*

*Pandemic flu is influenza that causes a global outbreak of serious illness that spreads easily from person to person. It is an acute viral disease of the respiratory tract, commonly called the “flu”. Persons of any age can get influenza.*

### **How is it spread?**

Influenza is spread from person to person by direct contact with respiratory droplets through coughing and sneezing. It may also be spread indirectly by articles contaminated with respiratory secretions. The flu virus enters the body through mucous membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth. The incubation period is usually 1-4 days.

### **How is it treated?**

Control of fever with acetaminophen or other antipyretic, adequate rest, and drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration are some measures used to alleviate flu symptoms. Children or teenagers with influenza should not receive salicylates (such as aspirin) because of the resulting risk of developing Reye syndrome. Antiviral drugs may also be available by prescription, when indicated.

### **How is it prevented?**

Avoid close contact with those who have cold or flu-like symptoms. You can reduce the chances of spreading the flu by:

- covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully--bag and bin them
- avoiding nonessential travel and large crowds whenever possible
- staying home when you are sick
- maintaining good basic hygiene; for example, washing your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face, or to other people
- cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. kitchen worktops, door handles) frequently using a standard cleaning product
- making sure your children follow this advice
- vaccination when available

### **SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA**

- Sudden onset of fever (100-103 °F in adults, and often higher in children)
- Chills
- Sore Throat
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Headache
- Generalized muscle aches
- Extreme fatigue
- Children may also experience nausea, vomiting and diarrhea along with respiratory symptoms

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