

# INFLUENZA

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

# INFLUENZA VIRUS

# INFLUENZA

Influenza or flu is a contagious disease caused by the influenza virus

## A. INFLUENZA VIRUS

There are 3 types of influenza virus, namely A, B and C. All types can infect human. Influenza virus A is the most dangerous as it infects both animals and human. It can mutate to produce a new more novel influenza virus that can cause epidemic and pandemic outbreak.

The influenza virus is spread through droplets from the mouth and nose when speaking, sneezing or coughing. The virus then enters the body through the respiratory tract.

## B. IS INFLUENZA AND COMMON COLD THE SAME?

No.

Even though both have similar symptoms, the symptoms for influenza are more severe and may cause life threatening complications.

Comparison between influenza and the common cold:

SYMPTOM	INFLUENZA (FLU)	COMMON COLD
Fever	High. Normally above 38°C	Low, below 38°C
Fatigue	Severe, lasting up to 2 - 3 weeks	Very mild
Muscle / joint ache	Moderate to severe	Mild
Cough	Severe, without phlegm in the beginning	None / Mild
Cold / runny nose	None / Mild	Severe
Sneezing	Frequent	Occasionally
Sore throat	Moderate to severe	None/Mild
Headache	Moderate to severe	Mild
Cause	Virus influenza A, B or C	Adenovirus, Rhinovirus, Parainfluenza virus, Corona virus and others



### C. WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR INFLUENZA?

Symptomatic treatment is recommended. There is no specific treatment for influenza but an antiviral agent may be considered. You are advised to consult your doctor.

You can also take the following actions on your own:

- Take fever medication such as paracetamol
- Drink warm water or fluids to relieve sore throat and cough
- Maintain a balanced diet and sufficient sleep or rest
- Avoid stress as it can weaken your immune system
- If signs and symptoms persist or worsen get treatment from your doctor

### D. HOW CAN WE PREVENT INFLUENZA FROM SPREADING?

- i. Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or handkerchief when sneezing or coughing
- ii. Wash you hands with soap and clean water each time after:
  - Coughing or sneezing
  - Touching raw food materials and contaminated surfaces
  - Touching your face, ears, nose, mouth and other parts of the body
- iii. Dispose used tissues into the dustbin
- iv. Wear a face mask when having symptoms
- v. Avoid public places

### E. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF INFLUENZA VACCINE?

The influenza vaccine is administered as a preventive vaccination. The seasonal influenza vaccine available in the market may protect normal healthy adult from influenza if there is a good match between vaccine strain and circulating viral strain.

The Ministry of Health recommends the influenza vaccination for those planning to visit countries during winter and pilgrims to Mecca. The vaccination is only provided by certain private clinics and private hospitals.

# BE SURE YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!

You should be able to understand and differentiate:

## AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian influenza or bird flu is a contagious disease that normally infects poultry and birds. It can also infect human.

## INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

An influenza epidemic is an outbreak of influenza among the people in a certain location or country.

## INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

An influenza pandemic occurs when influenza infects a large portion of the world's population. This is due to the emergence of a new novel influenza virus which the population does not have the immunity yet to fight.

The available seasonal influenza vaccine does not give protection against pandemic influenza virus.



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