

Influenza-like Illness

Influenza-like illness is a serious, contagious disease. It is spread by respiratory drops which occur when someone coughs, sneezes, or talks. It is also spread if someone touches something wet with respiratory droplets and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.

What to Expect

Influenza causes the abrupt onset of fever, all over body aches, and, sometimes, a dry cough, a mild runny nose, sore throat or nausea.

Fever from influenza lasts from 3 to 7 days. During this time it is important that you isolate yourself to keep from spreading the infection to others. You should stay at home until you are fever-free for 24 hours without taking medicine.

The flu leaves people feeling more easily fatigued than usual. Expect a day of recovery for every day of fever. Don't go back to your physical activities until you have been better for a few days.

The flu typically leaves people with a dry, irritating cough. If your cough is productive or you are having difficulty breathing you should be evaluated by a medical provider.

If you develop a fever after being better for a few days, seek medical care.

What to Do about the Flu

Influenza is best managed at home with simple self-care activities:

Take medicine for fever—You can use either of these medicines:

- Ibuprofen, 200mg, two tablets every six to eight hours (also called Motrin or Advil)
- Acetaminophen, 325mg, two tablets every four to six hours (also called Tylenol)

Get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids—Rest helps your body to fight the infection. Plenty of fluids will keep your fever down and help you rest more comfortably. A fever causes your body to dehydrate quickly so it is especially important that you take a lot of fluids.

Eat—When you are sick it is typical to feel like you have lost your appetite. Don't let the fever and sickness win: eat whatever you like but don't skip meals. You can send someone to the dining hall with your meal ticket if you are isolated with fever.

Avoid Drugs and Alcohol—these weaken the immune system and slow your recovery.

What about Medicines?

Because influenza is caused by a virus instead of a bacteria, antibiotic medicines will not help. There are medications which can be used to shorten the course of the flu. These medicines are typically reserved for patients with serious health problems. They are not recommended for the general population.

What if I have Other Health Conditions?

People with certain health conditions are at risk for more serious sickness from influenza. If you have any of the following conditions you should speak with your health care provider about your illness: asthma, diabetes, pregnancy, heart disease, and diseases which make the immune system weak the flu can be very serious.

When to Come to the Health Center

You should be seen at the Student Health Center or another medical provider if you have any of these warning signs:

- Difficulty breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness.
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting.
- Fever over 104 F or Fever lasting more than 3 days

How To Protect Yourself and Your Community

- GET A FLU SHOT! Flu shots do not cause the flu but they protect you from getting sick!
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands frequently. Use soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Stay in isolation until you are fever-free for 24 hours without medicine to bring your fever down. This means not going to classes or the dining hall. You can send someone to bring you food using your meal card.
- If you are sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them; if you must be around others wear a mask.

What About Classes?

You are not to attend classes (or work or other activities) until you are *fever-free for 24 hours without Ibuprofen or Acetaminophen*. We have been instructed by the Academic Senate not to write doctor's excuses. It is your responsibility to communicate with your professors and to meet your academic obligations.

Need Advice:

Visit our website at healthcenter.ucsc.edu
24 Hour Nurse Advice line: 831-459-2591

Need care when the Health Center is closed:

Seek the After Hours information on our website healthcenter.ucsc.edu