



What is influenza?

Influenza is a viral infection that affects the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, such as pneumonia. Most people will recover within a few days to 2 weeks.

What does a positive influenza test mean?

A positive result means that influenza virus was detected and is likely causing your symptoms. Common symptoms which often begin suddenly include fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and extreme tiredness.

What is the treatment for influenza?

If symptoms started within 2 days prior to a positive test, an antiviral medication may be prescribed to reduce the severity of the illness and help you recover faster. If medication is used, it should be started as soon as possible and taken exactly as prescribed. It is important to finish all medication as prescribed, even if you start feeling better. Other remedies are to get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and use over-the-counter medicines for symptom relief.

When to contact a healthcare provider?

- Symptoms do not improve or worsen within 72 hours
- Worsening cough or shortness of breath develops
- Cannot keep fluids down
- Concerns about medication

What over-the-counter medications can be used for symptom relief?

- Fever/Aches: Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin)
- Congestion: Saline nasal spray, neti pot, pseudoephedrine*
- Cough: Dextromethorphan
- Sore Throat: Cough drops, acetaminophen

*Check with your pharmacist if you have high blood pressure, heart disease, or are pregnant before taking.

How to prevent the spread of influenza?

Influenza can spread from person to person through respiratory droplets when someone coughs, sneezes, or talks. To help prevent the spread, stay home and avoid close contact with others for at least 24 hours after fever is gone without fever-reducing medications. Cover coughs and sneezes. Also wash hands often as this helps to stop the spread of germs. Getting vaccinated every year can help prevent influenza as well.

If household members have been exposed to influenza, are unvaccinated and are at high risk of complications they may be considered for preventive medication to reduce risk of getting sick. Talk to your pharmacist if exposure happened.

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Infectious Disease Society of America; World Health Organization; American Academy of Pediatrics