



Influenza Facts

You can spread the flu to people, including your family/whanau and friends, who are at most risk of complications

While general health affects the severity of an infection, the influenza virus is contagious and anyone can become infected.

Influenza, commonly called the flu, can be a serious illness that is sometimes fatal.

Infection with the influenza virus may lead to a stay in hospital for any age group but particularly if you are elderly or have an ongoing medical condition. Influenza can make an existing medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, a lot worse.

Even if you do not end up in hospital, influenza can keep you in bed for a week or more, preventing you from doing work or just about anything that requires leaving the house.

The flu spreads from person to person. The influenza virus is transferred in droplets of moisture expelled through breathing, coughing and sneezing. The virus is spread when a person touches any droplets which contain the influenza virus and then touch their mouth, nose or eyes before washing their hands.

Influenza can infect up to 1 in 5 of us every year.

Influenza can affect anyone, no matter how fit, active and healthy they may be. Although people with underlying health conditions are most at risk from influenza associated complications, previously healthy people can still become seriously ill.

Approximately 400 deaths each year in New Zealand are related to influenza infection.

The strains of influenza virus that reach New Zealand each year are usually different from the season before. Although New Zealand had a relatively mild influenza season in 2011, this may not be the case in 2012. The virulence of strains can vary from year to year or a new strain can emerge to which people are not immune.

Annual immunisation is recommended for two reasons:

- protection lessens over time

- each year influenza can be caused by different influenza viruses, that are not represented in the previous year’s vaccine

Immunity develops after you have been exposed to a particular strain of the virus through infection or immunisation. Influenza immunisation prepares and boosts your immune system to help you fight the influenza viruses expected to be circulating each year.

Seasonal influenza vaccinations are recognised as being the single most effective way of reducing the impact of seasonal influenza – especially for those most at risk of complications. This can be particularly true for the elderly.

Stop the spread of the flu

If you are unwell, stay at home until you are better.

Follow basic hygiene practices:

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds and dry them for 20 seconds – or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Don’t share drinks.
- Avoid crowded places.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze – then put the tissue in a lined bin.

Stop the flu before it gets you. Get immunised. Don’t spread the flu to you family and friends.

Immunisation may be FREE for you. Ask your doctor or nurse today.

Influenza Symptoms	Cold Symptoms
Sudden onset of illness. Moderate to severe illness lasting 7-10 days	Mild illness
Fever (usually high)	Mild fever
Headache (may be severe)	Mild headache (congested sinuses)
Dry cough may become moist	Sometimes a cough
Muscle aches	Muscle aches uncommon
Shivering	A runny nose
Bed rest necessary	
Can suffer severe complications (eg pneumonia)	




FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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